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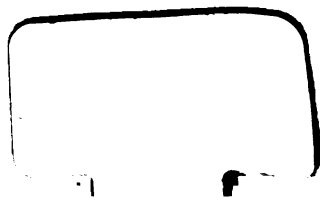
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HELEN GRANT AT ALDRED HOUSE



Girls by twos and threes were coming down the wide stairway. — *Page 1.*

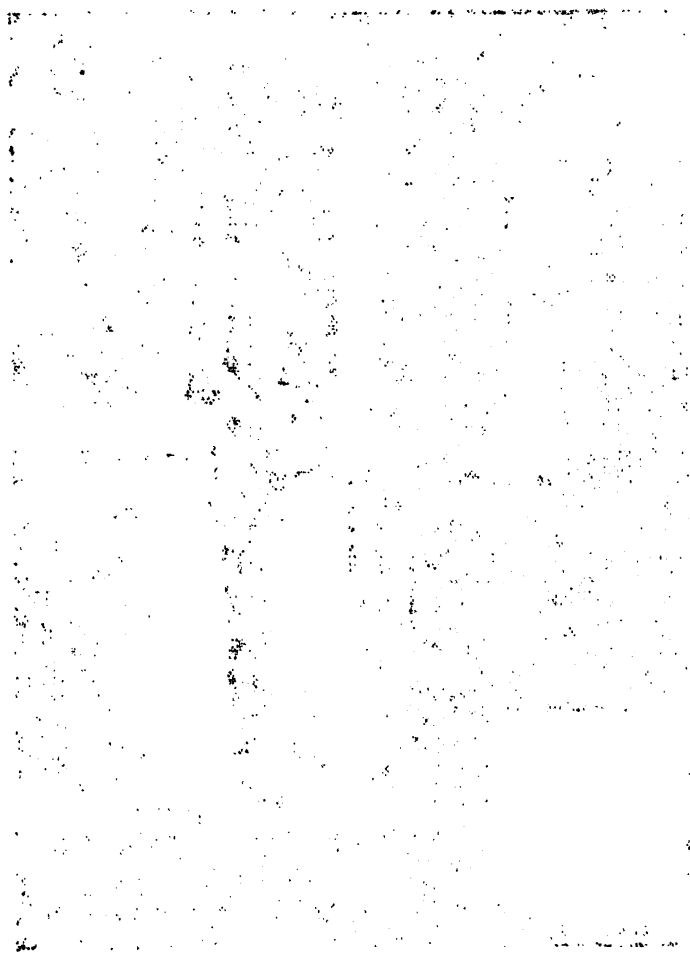
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The Helen Grant Books

HELEN GRANT AT ALDRED HOUSE

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

Author of "Helen Grant's Schooldays," "Helen Grant's Friends,"
"In the King's Country," "In Trust," "Larry," "The
Kathie Stories," "Almost as Good
as a Boy," etc.

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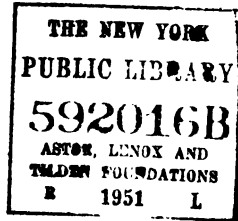


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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. AMONG FAMILIAR FACES	I
II. AN ADVENTURE	19
III. WAS IT A WISH FULFILLED?	37
IV. THE NEXT HAPPENINGS	57
V. WHAT THE OCEAN SAID	77
VI. ABOUT A YOUNG MAN	96
VII. JUST A GIRL	114
VIII. GATHERING UP THE FRAGMENTS	138
IX. AN ATMOSPHERE OF COMRADESHIP	158
X. THE BEGINNING OF THINGS	176
XI. A GIRL IN LOVE	195
XII. WHICH IS BETTER, LOVE OR FRIENDSHIP?	215
XIII. GIRLS AND GIRLS	237
XIV. MYSTERIOUS POSSIBILITIES	255
XV. THREADS CROSSED AND TANGLED	277
XVI. AN AWAKENED POTENTIALITY	291
XVII. TURNING THE LEAF OF GIRLHOOD	314

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Girls by twos and threes were coming down the wide stairway	1
They fastened their boat and took a winding way up the wooded bank	26
The great waves came on with their frothy, snowy-white crowns	91
Helen flung herself on the footstool, clasping both of Mrs. Wilmarth's hands	131
"Helen," Daisy raised on one elbow	223
Crocuses and daffodils were out and the violets were showing blue in the velvety grass . .	292

Helen Grant at Aldred House

CHAPTER I

AMONG FAMILIAR FACES

THE dinner bell had given its welcome signal at Aldred House. Girls by twos and threes were coming down the wide stairway, some with their arms about each other, laughingly keeping step. There was a group in the front of the hall and there seemed some unusual excitement amid the eager greetings.

"It's Helen Grant!"

"Oh, no, she's too tall. And different—"

"It's her black gown. You know her father died. Yes, it is Helen."

Two or three pushed through the throng and caught her hand.

The girl in the black gown with the white ruche about her neck, her hair done up high with a silver arrow in it and some fluffy ends about her forehead, her skirt long, and taller than she was nine months ago, was certainly Helen. The

clear eyes had their frank outlook, her mouth, which was undeniably sweet and full of pretty curves when she smiled, made her look really lovely standing there amid the joyous greetings. She was touched by the heartiness.

"We have an old scholar back with us," announced Mrs. Wiley; "Miss Helen Grant. I see that most of you remember her. I am much gratified."

They fell into a procession and moved to the dining room. Miss Craven was hostess at her table, and she had asked that Helen might be guest of honor. There were nods and smiles as she glanced up and down.

There was one girl who had given a formal nod, as she passed to her seat among the graduating class. This was Daisy Bell. She need not trouble herself about Juliet Craven's friend. To spring this surprise upon her was mean and discourteous. Let Miss Craven triumph—why should she care? She would graduate in June, and Helen would be in the class below.

"It is so delightful to be warmly remembered," Helen kept thinking, while every pulse thrilled with pleasure. There was a number of new faces. There were girls who had grown and changed as much as she had.

Afterward there was quite an ovation. Madame Meran hoped she had not forgotten all her music, and her heart suddenly went back to Mrs. Wilmarth. Miss Lane, whom several of the girls had marked for an old maid, had married a clergyman with a growing son. Miss Fields, stout and rosy, had come in her place. Miss Wiley was very cordial and said "it was quite like getting an old friend back, the girls seemed so glad."

Juliet Craven brought her two protégés, rather plain little girls of thirteen whose step-mother had packed them off to boarding school a year after her marriage. Their names were Wilma and Elma Gartney, fair-headed, blue-eyed twins, but one a little darker than the other, so that confusion was avoided.

The girls were rather demoralized during the study period, though Helen and Mrs. Wiley were in the reception room settling a few points for the coming year.

"In most branches I am just about where I left off," the girl admitted frankly. "Considerably ahead in Latin and beginning Greek, which went very much against the grain at first," laughing cheerfully. "Asia from the Ural mountains to the gulf of Aden as it was thousands of years

ago will not help me much in modern matters. I feel something as if I had recently been ex-humed," in an amused voice.

"And you are—how old?"

"Just seventeen."

"Eighteen is young enough to enter college. Your system is stronger, your mind better disciplined, your aims more clearly defined."

"I have only one," exclaimed Helen, "and that is teaching. I like girls. And I like study."

"These three months will prepare you for the graduating class. And I am sure Mrs. Aldred will be glad to have you for the year. She is very much interested in you and so regretted the tragic episode that made a break in your life. And you have come quite near to another, Miss Craven told me."

Helen gave a little shiver. What if she were in England with her father, shut out of all this bright companionship!

"My father was a great Oriental scholar, I found, and lived almost entirely in the past. I hope not to do that. It may not be so grand, but I do like modern interests and the people of to-day. Though the old discoveries are wonderful."

"Very few women pursue that line. It is

too unsympathetic, or they are not so deeply intellectual. It has a solitary aspect and girls are gregarious. So you think you have fallen behind in the regular school routine?"

"Oh, I know I have. But I am going to study in earnest. I am so glad you decided to accept me."

The face was so bright and eager, so full of purpose and resolution that Mrs. Wiley felt Mrs. Aldred would not be disappointed in her. They talked over a plan of study until she caught sight of Miss Craven lingering in the hall.

"I am so glad you could take me in," and she squeezed Juliet's hand in her enthusiasm.

"I asked for you at once. I took one of the larger rooms this year for I wanted to make a kind of home, and you will see that your treasures are scattered around. Oh, you can't think what joy your letter gave me. I was afraid we should not be together again for a long while. I resolved when the word came of your father's death to entreat you—"

"How good you are!" Helen's eyes softened with emotion.

"There would be nothing heroic in what I proposed to do, and I can never forget how you took me up when I first came here. I do not

think girls and women are always friendly to each other, and I was a most unpromising object, was I not? I sometimes try to recall myself. It seems mean to say it, but I suppose if the money had been exploited first—”

“You would have had more attention, I am truly ashamed to say. But girls do satirize and turn any point they can catch into ridicule and are often unjust. Some persons insist that this strengthens the character—it may harden it, but I doubt if it is ever beneficial except to those silly, sentimental girls who are always exaggerating their own feelings and have to be laughed out of their follies. Only it seems to me a kindly welcome is better among girls until you have thoroughly tested them.”

“And I can’t make you any return—” in a disappointed tone.

“You are returning all the time,” and Helen smiled brightly up at her friend. “You have made efforts of which every girl would not have been capable. Many would have been discouraged and given up study, taken the softer side of life. And you are making yourself a true woman. There! doesn’t that seem patronizing and like the commendations one reads in ‘Answers to Correspondents?’ ”

Helen laughed with a gay flavor, then continued: "And I shall ask for your congratulations. I shall have enough money to take me through college, with a wise and judicious economy—doesn't that sound sensible? I don't dare build air castles so far off, or plan what I shall do then. But, Juliet, you have grown stronger, more resolute, it shines in your eyes. And I remarked it in your manner at the table."

"I am glad if you see any change. After my visit to you and understanding how bravely you were taking up a great cross, I resolved not to live so much to myself or in myself. It is the good seed you have sown. You make life inspiring, because you are helpful everywhere."

"Not always. I make mistakes."

"But you have the courage that tries at once to surmount them. That is what I lack, the resolution for the second effort. I hate to be rebuffed."

"Do you always go out half-way to meet others?"

"No, I don't, but I am trying a little. I felt so sorry for those Gartney children, and I did really make an effort."

"They seem very fond of you."

"Yes. They opened their poor, trembling lit-

tle hearts to me one day. Their father had been very fond of them—he was some sort of a newspaper man. They played about in his study, and he took them out to walk. They were first everywhere until the new wife came. I don't suppose she is positively unkind, but they are shut out of the old love and it sort of bewilders them. So I thought what you were to me, and I was a woman grown, though a child in the experience of affection."

"That is the currency of good will that goes round the world—thinking of others. Oh, that is the bell, and we must not transgress, though we could talk all night," and Helen smiled archly.

Was she really back at Aldred House? She could not sleep for her brain kept reviewing the pictures of the past. She remembered how she and Daisy Bell had a school-girl tiff one night about Juliet Craven, and Daisy had been hard and ungracious, and afterward, in the midst of her evening prayer two soft arms had stolen about her neck and the sweet warm lips had kissed her. And last winter there had come this misunderstanding in which Daisy refused to listen to any explanation. Could she, ought she, make an effort to win her back? She loved Mrs.

Bell so much. She had a stronger nature than Mrs. Wilmarth, and a clearer judgment in many respects.

"I don't know how I have come to love so many people," and Helen sighed softly as if she had been in the wrong.

It was rather difficult to find her exact standing, for her class had gone ahead of her in most studies. Madame Meran bewailed her loss in French and music, and said with uplifted hands, "Oh, you poor child!" But Helen accepted the set-back and the solitary recitations with her usual cheerfulness. She and Juliet would keep step.

She studied Daisy with some curiosity. She was really a young lady, the head of a little clique who clustered about her as satellites. She was still small and dainty, fair and easily flushing, the lips soft and full with smiles and tremors and fun mingling at times. Her shining hair flashed with every quick turn of her head, and her eyes could take to themselves bewildering lights. She studied different ways to make herself attractive, and she dearly loved to be admired.

Of course they had to meet and speak. They said Miss Grant and Miss Bell in a politely ceremonious fashion. But each was engrossed in

her own sphere. Then when Helen did feel at liberty there were letters to write to Mrs. Dayton and Mrs. Wilmarth, to dear Mr. Walters and to Nat, family epistles to Uncle Jason, though the answers always came in Nat's. But he would have felt hurt not to have a letter all to himself.

Then there was Mrs. Bell. The delightful visit recurred to her mind, and she knew she had looked forward to repeating it. The dainty book of poems Mr. Bell had given her was still a favorite companion. She did not relish being set in a false light to them both, yet she could not answer Mrs. Bell's question any better now than the evening she had written the story and then torn it up. Neither could she be so discourteous as not to write at all.

She made several attempts, but at last she achieved a letter quite to her satisfaction. It detailed brightly the events of the past months that had ended so satisfactorily to her, the coming to Aldred House, the changes in the girls, her surprise at finding Daisy really grown up and her advancement in everything and her charm. No word that one could really construe into indifference, but it was there all the same.

"I am sorry there should be a break with Helen Grant," Mrs. Bell said, handing the letter to her husband. "I am quite sure there is some misunderstanding at the bottom of it. I had counted on her being a real friend to Daisy. I liked her so much. She has such a high, courageous nature, she is so upright in word and deed. And I am sorry for ourselves. She was such a delightful visitor."

"I don't know when I have met a girl I have liked so well."

He laid the letter down with a sigh.

Oh, how lovely the Spring was at Westchester! Helen's every pulse tingled with exhilaration and joyous life. They went botanizing, they studied the trees, the clouds, the stars at night. How wonderful the world was! How could any one shut out even a part of it!

Mrs. Wilmarth wrote that Dr. Bradford had arranged the summer for her as he wanted her to try sea bathing. They would go to a quiet little Long Island village where there was an excellent beach just above the Great South Bay. She would take her maid, and with her two girls she would grow strong and happy. Nothing must interfere.

Juliet studied her letter a little uncertainly.

"Of course you will go," Helen exclaimed decisively. "Here is another chance for friendship that comes knocking at your very door," and she glanced up smilingly. "Surely this time you can't make a Chinese wall out of your fortune."

"No, it isn't that. Only I am afraid you rate me too highly, Helen. And Mrs. Wilmarth may expect—"

"I find most people who care enough about you to ask you to their homes *do* expect something in return. Why shouldn't they when they have taken the trouble to give you a pleasant time? You would look for gratitude from the very poorest to whom you did a favor—you do not always get it I know," with an archness in both face and voice that made Juliet smile. "And why should not a person of some cultivation have as much appreciation?"

"I didn't mean that exactly, Helen, I think you can hardly understand the feeling of one who knows herself poor in spirit—"

"Why, that is one of the beatitudes," interrupted Helen. "Think of the promise!"

"But mine is in things to give away," protested Juliet.

"Oh, don't you remember the bit of verse from Pilgrim's Progress :

"There was a man though some do count him mad;
The more he gave away the more he had.'

And I believe many small graces grow with the using. You simply give the best you have if you see it pleases. Mrs. Wilmarth is passionately fond of music, and you can minister to her there. You are a very good reader, oh, and you know such quantities of exquisite verses, just the thing to say over in the twilight. So no more humility, if you please, but accept with great gladness of heart that you have found some one to whom neither wealth nor poverty makes any difference."

"You put everything in such an attractive light that one must needs be convinced," was the reply.

Even Helen could not quite understand the heart hunger, the longing for kindnesses freely given to others. It was true Juliet did not invite them; she often seemed cold and apathetic when she was merely timid. If she could have been put back to sixteen and had a true girl's growth, but womanhood had come before she was prepared for it.

Helen found there was a good deal to do to catch up with the girls who were to go in the graduating class, and she went at it with her usual earnestness. But she was the same Helen Grant with the inspiring note in her voice, the bright good humor, the shining eyes, the readiness to help, and her different experiences had given her a wisdom that does not always come in youth.

Early in June Mrs. Aldred returned. The girls had made a parterre of the house. Wreaths and branches of bloom made the air fragrant and over the doorway was the word "Welcome" woven of golden-hearted daisies.

They went to the station in a procession, for the train did not get in until five o'clock. There were friends and neighbors, too, and the ovation touched the traveler to the heart, and was always one of her choicest remembrances.

The girls escorted her home in triumph. She had changed very little except to appear younger, the rest and pleasure had improved her, and the joyous greeting made her seem a girl with the rest.

It being Friday evening there were no lessons. They all went out on the porch in the moonlight and made a circle about her, eager to hear some

of the events of her journey. Gertrude was improving rapidly and would spend another year studying art; Grace was to return in September. There were so many examination questions she could verify, so many scenes and pictures and buildings of which it was delightful to hear that they would fain have kept her talking all night.

She was to be only a visitor this month and insisted that she should take upon herself no authority whatever. She set herself about renewing her familiarity with the older pupils, and getting acquainted with the younger ones.

She had more than her olden interest in Helen Grant and was desirous of hearing the incidents of the past year. She had met two or three friends of Mrs. Van Dorn's who did hold that lady in high esteem. Helen was very glad to hear that.

"You seem to have a rather odd fate in one respect," she said with a thoughtful smile. "And to come so near going abroad again!"

"But I did not want to, in that manner. Even if I had tried my best my father would have been disappointed in me. I like entertaining study, something of to-day, and not the dried up facts of ages and ages ago. They may do for learned professors, but that is not my ambition,"

and Helen gave her bright smile. "I want to be in touch with girls."

"The most natural and the most healthy desire of seventeen," was the approving reply. "And I am glad circumstances will allow you to follow your aim so comfortably. Though I think you would have worked your way through. You are the kind of girl who finds friends, and who does not centre them exclusively about herself, nor demand that they shall not advance beyond her range. You are taking the broad view of life which is not so common in youth."

"But I am afraid, sometimes," hesitatingly, "that I like people too easily. I do not want to be blown about by every wind of fancy."

"Discrimination will come later on. I thought when you first came here, that you had an unusual share of reticence for such an eager, enthusiastic girl. And I am glad you have not lost interest in Miss Craven. She has improved wonderfully. I am much interested in her future. I was afraid her guardian would insist upon her trying the world before she was half fitted for it and some man would marry her for her fortune."

"She is too much afraid of that herself," laughed Helen. "And she is really very fond of

study. We shall both try to graduate next year."

"I am glad of that," was the reply.

Mrs. Aldred was much entertained studying her girls again and watching the improvement some of them had made. And she saw that Daisy Bell was quite indifferent to Helen.

"Have you and Daisy outgrown your friendship?" she asked with a soft smile that was sympathetic rather than curious. "Or is it simply a case of a young woman and a girl?"

Helen flushed scarlet. "I think we have," she answered slowly. "You see I was away and the class went ahead of me. And I am only a girl as yet. I do not want to be a woman."

There was something back of this, but Mrs. Aldred was not one to force a confidence.

"Such endings frequently occur," she said gravely. "We outgrow many things in this life and get fitted for others. That is true development. Some few people remain stationary, but they are generally unimportant characters, or else living in circumscribed environments. Even they may not be altogether to blame."

Helen thought of the narrowness and complacency of many of the people of Hope. And she was glad it was given to her to outgrow their manner of thinking. How Aunt Jane prided

herself on the old routine of living and doing, and nagged at Nat for bringing in new methods. There were others who never broadened out, never looked beyond the boundaries of their own little town. Was that true content? And was content so admirable?

CHAPTER II

AN ADVENTURE

ODDLY enough Helen was thinking of Daisy Bell as she went out into the hall. The light, graceful step came down the stairway with a sort of dazzle. There was always a flying curl, an end of ribbon or the gauzy rosette somewhere that seemed to make an ellipse.

She nodded carelessly as she passed Helen. Probably the old anger was gone, and she did not care. Yet the outgrowing gave her a pang. If Daisy had not been so positive, so insistent in her protestations—but in a year one could change greatly. Daisy was charming a little circle with the same fervor with which she had appealed to her. Was it insincerity?

The deepest pang would be giving up Mr. and Mrs. Bell and the ideal home life that had so penetrated the desires of her heart, and the wise, judicious friend she had hoped to keep. Mrs. Wilmarth adored her too much to be a serviceable mentor. Mrs. Dayton with all her tender generosity would prefer that she had chosen the

narrower life. With Juliet Craven she was the leading spirit. One could rely upon Mrs. Aldred, and yet, you could only be one of many.

That was selfish, too. But a motherless girl might be forgiven for the longing.

Examinations began. As usual several girls had prepared for college. Others were being pushed up. Juliet did finely. Helen was hardly up to the mark in all studies but she knew that she could make it up in vacation.

The little Gartney children had come to be quite at home, and now were full of sorrow at parting with Miss Craven. They were to go to an aunt's in the country, as their father and new mother were to take a tour westward, and the aunt they scarcely knew.

"If I had a house of my own I should beg for them. They will have lonely lives for the next few years. Still they have each other. And they are coming back, their father wrote."

There was to be the usual commencement. Or, rather, it was to be a little unusual, quite the affair of the season. This compliment was due to the kindly neighbors who had so warmly welcomed her back, Mrs. Aldred thought, and several of the parents from a distance had expressed a desire to be present.

"My father and mother want to come," Daisy was explaining to a circle of her admirers. "I really did not imagine they were so proud of me. And my sister also. Then we are going to spend the night in New York, and the next day Columbia College Commencement takes place and my brother has one of the orations. Why, I think papa ought really to be proud of us!"

"As if he wasn't," declared a chorus of enthusiastic voices. "But we shall miss you so."

"The light of Aldred House will be gone."

Daisy turned and made a pretty, sweeping courtesy, the seductive gleam of pleasure in her eyes.

"Is it the penny dip?" with a bright rippling laugh.

"Well you needn't despise the little candle. Think of the honor Shakespeare paid it."

"But you are all going, too," returned Daisy. "Seven—a famous number."

"And five collegiates."

"And two butterflies, Sophie Durand and myself. Well—we shall flit from flower to flower. I mean to have a splendid time."

"And break hearts by the dozens."

"Well, hearts should not be so brittle," subjoined Daisy with a dainty toss of the head. "I

do not believe they break so easily. I notice that they soon console themselves with another."

"Oh, Daisy, you must not turn cynical. It will not suit your style."

"I should be very true to a true friend," Daisy said with emphasis. "But I shouldn't wait for a friend to throw me over when I found she or even he," with a laugh, "was loving some one better. I'm not inclined to play second fiddle."

"You will not need to," said one of the girls. "I should like to have your gift of attraction."

"Really, I am proud to have a quality some one desires," and as she gave her head a little toss the wavy hair made a golden glitter.

"I was thinking of something, a plan I will propose," exclaimed May Bradshaw, rather tired of the personal talk. She was a tall, fine-looking girl with a resolute face. After two years of society she had come back for a post-graduate course and was going to college.

The eager faces were turned to her at once.

"Let us have one last row upon the river."

"Do you recall that night in June
Upon the Danube river?"

hummed another. "With all my heart, only let us take it late in the afternoon, as we have

no cavaliers to rescue us in case of danger."

"I have been thinking it would be delightful to go up to Rip's Point and gather branches of rhododendrons. We can keep them until Thursday."

"That's just splendid. We will have them to adorn the house on the grand occasion. And why can't we go this afternoon? Let us plead for an early dinner, and the sun will be almost down so we shall not get burned to shame our white gowns. Four rowers and four guests. Perhaps the rowers had better offer their services, or shall we vote them in?"

"I'll offer mine," exclaimed May Bradshaw. "You may hear of me in the distant future as the champion oarswoman."

There were two other proffers, and then one was voted in even if it was not parliamentary.

"And I shall invite Daisy Bell as my guest because she never fidgets or rocks the boat. And she can sing that dear old Blue Danube."

"The guests must be the musical part of the crew," insisted some one.

Two or three longing eyes were cast at Juliet Craven, but it was well known that Daisy Bell did not admire her, so the lot fell upon some one else. Mrs. Wiley consented on condition that

they should not stay out late, and ordered the dinner at once. The girls hunted up baskets in which to stow away their trophies, and the four rowers donned their yachting attire, looking pretty enough for a much more important occasion. Then they marched down to the landing where they found their boat in readiness.

The river was a pretty, irregular stream, now narrowing, now widening out. Occasionally a small sloop found its way up, but the stream was not certain enough in its current to attract business. Up above Westchester it broadened out into a sort of lake, fed by two small streams that in spring freshets rendered it rather turbulent. The country on the opposite shore was very picturesque. Here was a bluff of gray rock overhung with vines, and there were odd little nooks suggesting dryad haunts, then a belt of trees largely fir, spruce and hemlock that added a continual greenness to the landscape. Now everything was in the glory of early summer and countless wild flowers lent their beauty to the scene.

The sun dropped down behind the hills and sent long beautiful shadows in all kinds of opalescent tints. Back of the trees it was a flaming gorgeous red like a great fire that shone through the interstices. Up in the arch of the

horizon there was a mingling of all colors, drowning out the blue. The birds were calling each other home and the wood thrush poured forth his melodious evening song.

"I am glad I am not an artist," exclaimed one of the girls. "If I were, a picture like this would be my despair and drive me crazy. And now I can enjoy it to the farthest recesses of my brain without a thought of brush or palette."

"And how few people give thanks for the great gallery of nature where you are admitted without money or a complimentary ticket."

"Yet occasionally we do pay our way, for instance the price of the boat," was the sententious reply.

"You unsentimental girl!"

"But what is sentiment compared to truth?"

"Wasn't it Charles Lamb who said 'Truth is too precious to be wasted upon everybody?'"

They dropped into merriment, flinging jests and quotations at one another, breaking into snatches of gay song, calling attention to some unusual bit of picturesque beauty. Now the sun dropped entirely behind the hill, leaving their own side in an exquisite golden glow, while in the shade there was an indefinable richness of dark

green verging to twilight suggestiveness. Fireflies came out. A whippoorwill called to its mate in a long, melancholy note.

For several miles they went up triumphantly, though the tide was nearly on the change.

There the river took a little bend and for some distance there was a rocky, shelving shore. And here, quite a long point, when the hills began again. They fastened their boat and took a winding way up the wooded bank. Here rhododendrons and laurel grew in the wildest profusion and were a sight in blossom time, seldom indeed molested. Pink, white and the deeper red, just opening, great bud spikes that would be sure to unfold in water.

"It seems a shame that all this should be 'born to blush unseen,'" quoted one of the girls.

"I like to think there are some things in the world that are not despoiled by the ruthless hand of fashion, for oftentimes it is that," returned May Bradshaw. "This looks just the same as it did four or five years ago, and I shall think of it a great many times. Nature is so generous when you let her alone and does bring her work to perfection when she has a chance."

"What shall we do for wild places when all the earth is occupied?"



They fastened their boat and took a winding way up the wooded bank. — *Page 26.*

"Oh, we will be in some other country perhaps exploring the planets that are such realms of mystery to us now, glad that there was a little knowledge left."

They filled their baskets and loaded their arms and retraced their steps, packing away their treasures and taking last surveys of a really beautiful spot, loth to leave it. The sky was melting to a dusky white with soft gray at the edges, where presently the blue would appear with the trailing stars.

The tide was turning lazily now, and they rowed slowly, singing songs, dropping insensibly into the plaintive ones. For at heart, hopeful as they were of the coming years, anxious to try their strength and win something from the world, there was a tender undercurrent of days that would never come again, of the

"Something sweet,
That follows youth with flying feet."

"There is a black cloud in the northeast," cried Gertrude Rand. "What if a shower should catch us?"

"That isn't the place for a shower. And it is going to pieces," was the confident reply.

The day had been very warm. Now the wind

suddenly veered northward and came in great sweeps, shaking the shrubbery and bending the more pliant branches of the trees with the mysterious moaning of nightfall.

"Lucky for us it comes from the north," said May. "The wind and tide are in our favor. And the south is full of stars."

"It is going to be cooler," declared Grace Deane. "And that will be a blessing. I have baked for the last three days."

A strong gust came more from the eastward and almost drove them into the shore which was very sloping here.

"Oh, we must not get aground."

When it subsided they rowed a little farther out and for some moments went on beautifully. Then there came another gust of wind that almost whirled them around, and sent the boat along sharply.

"Oh, May, the rift!" cried a voice in affright.

The wind came off conqueror. They were forced swiftly into something as if the passage between Scylla and Charybdis had opened, and though it gave them a shock and snapped one oar they soon righted. Having done that, the bursting cloud sent the blue black drifts and

tatters over the sky and subsided, though the tumult on the river lingered.

"Now we must try to back out since we cannot go forward," said May. "A good strong push, girls."

They all tried, paused and rested, and tried again, yet they were not simply aground but wedged in a sort of gorge that held them prisoners.

"Oh, what shall we do?" in a chorus of anxious tones. "How can we get out?"

"We are safe at least, and there is no danger of a shower. See how blue it is in the north, almost like a winter night."

"If someone would come along!"

They all shouted in unison and a thousand echoes were the only answer. Again and again they shouted until the woods rang, but with no result.

"We cannot stay here all night, though I think there would be a rescue party. I'll tell you what I am going to do. Do you see that light glimmering through the little opening? I'm sure it is a house. I'm going to wade to the shore and run up there."

May Bradshaw stood up in her young strength, her voice inspiring.

"Oh, you don't know how deep the water is."

"I'll take an oar to measure. Don't be afraid."

"But you'll get awful wet."

"I'll pin up my skirts and not mind the rest."

She stepped out bravely with the oar for an alpenstock, and threaded her way safely, giving a cheer as she reached the shore. Then she picked her way up to the cottage light, where a large family were seated round the tea table. A woman stood at the head, dishing out a savory stew.

Miss Bradshaw told her plight without any circumlocution. Could they get another boat to take them home?

"Well now," exclaimed the biggest boy, "we ain't got no boat. They've one over to Beecroft's."

"Where is that?"

"A spell up the river. If you'll wait until I get my supper, I'll go along, I'm powerful hungry."

"I've heerd that this ten or twelve year," commented the woman with a grim but not unkindly smile.

Powerfully hungry he seemed to be. The woman insisted that Miss Bradshaw should have a cup of tea and a chunk of 'lasses cake, but she would accept only a glass of milk. It was rather

funny to hear the children's good natured wrangle. At last Jack was ready to start.

It was a rough road and a very long "spell," Miss Bradshaw thought, and here they had just finished supper. There was Mr. Beecroft and his wife, Tim, eighteen or so, and two girls. Miss Bradshaw repeated her story.

"Well, if that don't beat all!" exclaimed the senior. "Last week we thought we'd blast the pesky thing out, it's bothered for years. We did kick up a bobbery but we hadn't enough dynamite. We split the thing consid'able, an' I s'pose you jest druv in it slick as grease! It's funny enough to laugh about," and he did that to perfection. "We're goin' to take the hull p'int out when we get some more dynamite. Tim, you get out the boat and go an' help the gals outen the scrape. 'Pears like we helped to get 'em in it. An' you take the lantern, too."

"There are eight of us," said Miss Bradshaw.

"Well I declare!" ejaculated Mr. Beecroft.

"You had better get the Ketchems' boat," said one of the girls. "Ours leaks, you know."

"Well—I think I had," nodding his head reflectively. "I'll get it and row down. Jack, you see that the lady don't go astray in the woods."

Miss Bradshaw expressed her gratitude and

the party started out, Tim with tremendous strides. It was quite dark under the trees, but the moon made a silvery radiance on the river as here and there they caught glimpses of it. But she was in no mood to enjoy the serene beauty of the night and she hardly listened to Jack, who felt well enough acquainted to be loquacious. Were the girls worried? Did it seem long to them?

They watched the stars come out, and aired their astronomy, speculating on the worlds so hidden from mortal ken. It was growing colder, so they drew their dress skirts up over their shoulders, and talked over the test questions and hopes for next year, for now they had no heart for merriment. The boat did not move, so they were secure enough.

They saw a light coming down the river presently. But where was May?

A strong voice gave a shout and their courage revived, as they sent back a cheer.

"She has found a boat. All's well that ends well," was the cheerful exclamation.

It came swiftly down to them, its beacon light shining and showing up the young oarsman who called out:

"Hello! Be you the crowd fast in the rift?"

They answered. But where *was* May? And had he come by pure providential accident?

"Is there any such thing?" queried one of the girls.

Tim made his explanations. Then he gave a shout that made the woods ring. It was soon answered.

"Jack and the lady ain't far off. You see you would have been safe even in a shower. But it's rather funny that you should have been druv jest in here. I don't s'pose you could have done it on a try!"

"The gust of wind did it. Rude Boreas sure enough."

There was another call through the woods. Then the sound of voices and the rustling of shrubbery and the two figures emerged in the moonlight.

"Oh, May!" exclaimed the girls in a breath.

"Did you get tired waiting? But I found some one at last. It's rather lonely up here and not thickly settled," with a laugh.

Tim and Jack did a little sparring at first. Then the elder said to the girls:

"I'll hold my boat stiddy up to your stern and you step over keerful, jest one at a time, though you'd only get a ducking if you tumbled, you

wouldn't drown. We'll see 'bout your boat tomorrow. Danged if I b'lieve she'll run away. How many of you gals can row?"

"Six of us."

"Then we won't need Jack, and the boat will be full enough without him."

They were taken off without any misadventure. Even the flowers followed suit. Miss Bradshaw expressed her warmest thanks to Jack, who said in country awkwardness—" 'Twas jest nothin' at all, only I don't b'lieve you could have found your way alone."

Although they were cold, their spirits rose as they went spinning down the stream. Then they caught sight of another light and were greeted with a signal cry.

In truth, as time passed the two ladies at the school began to feel very anxious, especially when the shower threatened. The younger girls had retired, the elder ones were gathered about Mrs. Aldred, never wearying of hearing the interesting episodes of her journey. Yet Helen Grant's thoughts strayed off now and then to the graceful, dainty figure that had stood in the hall announcing her plans and pleasures with such a triumphant air. Only a few days more and they would give each other a careless good-bye and

the old difference would never be made up. But then, other girls had gone their way, other youthful friendships had been sundered. Still she did regret that she must go out of the life of Mr. and Mrs. Bell.

Presently there was a note of alarm. "I think we had better walk down to the dock," Mrs. Aldred said. "And it might be wisdom to send a boat up to meet them."

Several of the older girls begged to go, so quite a party set out. No alarm was felt, as the girls had been up the river many a time and there really was no chance of an accident; they had gone farther than they meant, or spent more time gathering flowers, and the little squall had been only momentary. But down in the south there were some suspicious looking clouds and the wind was hovering about the east.

However a boat went out with two men. But it needed not to go very far and then there was a cheerful shout floating down to them that told everybody was safe.

"It was quite romantic," declared Miss Bradshaw, with the brightest laugh she could summon, for she was really cold and tired. "We ran into a rift and were wedged fast. There wasn't a bit of danger, but we had to hunt up someone

to come to the rescue, which Mr. Beecroft did gallantly, and so, like the old woman with her misadventures, we were enabled to get home that very same night. Your thanks are due to him."

He was explaining how they had failed to blow the rift out of the river and left it in a rather dangerous condition. Half a dozen volunteered to go up the next day and settle the matter after rescuing the boat.

They hurried homeward, and though there had been no real danger there was a feeling of gratitude in every heart. There were hot baths and ginger tea and everybody was safe in bed about midnight.

"Though I think we shall get the shower after all," said Mrs. Aldred. "It is growing quite close and warm again, and the south looks suspicious. It would be an improvement to have a little cooler weather."

CHAPTER III

WAS IT A WISH FULFILLED?

WHILE the stars were still out in the north there were vivid flashes of lightning and purple black clouds seemed to rush up from the south while the northerly gust tore them in tatters, veering this way and that. Suddenly a glow seemed to set the world on fire, and a tremendous peal of thunder crashed everywhere and rolled off to the gulf of Mexico, followed by a sharp dash of rain.

Just after the peal there was a wild cry of terror and when Miss Wiley opened her door to listen she saw a white figure running to and fro talking and sobbing.

"Oh, Miss Daisy, what is it? You are safe, dear," and she clasped her in her arms.

But the girl was confused and past reasoning, her eyes distraught, her whole frame shaking as with an ague. Mrs. Aldred joined her and they tried to tranquilize Daisy, but in vain. She talked of some awful danger and held tightly to the friendly arm.

Miss Wiley glanced into her room and made a light. "There is nothing amiss," she explained, "but the peal of thunder was terrific."

The girls came out in affright to see what had happened. Mrs. Aldred entreated them to return to their rooms, and begged Miss Wiley to take Daisy to hers while she prepared a composing draught, and called up the nurse. There was no real danger, and in all probability Miss Bell had been roused from her first sleep and was hysterical.

"Of course their adventure was trying to the nerves and I noticed that Miss Daisy looked utterly exhausted. But if we can get her to sleep again I think she will be all right."

Mary came and tried her soothing powers but Daisy appeared possessed by some wild idea of flight. She swallowed the draught, but it did not seem to calm her.

"Oh, I do hope it will not be serious! She was counting so on Commencement, and has passed so successfully."

The rain had nearly ceased, though there were some distant mutterings of thunder.

"I want Helen Grant," Daisy exclaimed suddenly, making another attempt to leave her bed. "I must go to her. There is something—"

"Helen will come here," and Mrs. Aldred nodded to Mary to summon her.

The girls had hardly subsided from the disturbance. Helen answered at once, and slipping on a wrapper went to the room in a curious state of trepidation. Daisy was tossing about with half-closed eyes and flushed face, her golden hair like a cloud about her.

"Speak to her," said nurse Mary. "She seems hardly conscious."

To come this way. To speak some words of soothing and comfort and perhaps be repulsed!

"Daisy;"—the voice was low and clear. "Daisy," and she took one hand in hers, that were steady if her nerves were not. "I am here and the storm is all over. Nothing shall harm you."

Daisy quieted a moment, then she burst out again wanderingly. She was in the boat and begged to be saved. "I must see Helen," she cried.

"Talk to her—anything to calm her until the sedative takes effect."

Oh, what should she say? She longed to take her in the arms that had enfolded her many a time, but she was afraid of rousing some antagonism. Then like an inspiration a poem of Whittier's came to her, one they had both been

fond of. In a slow, clear voice she began though she had to make an effort. The lines were so regular, so full of faith and love and like swells of music. Daisy seemed to listen though she still sobbed a little and tossed about, but the motions lost their violence, and a sort of languor crept over her. Helen came to the last verse—

"I know not where the islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

Daisy opened her eyes wide and glanced at Helen, then they drooped slowly, and she gave a long, quivering breath and was quiet.

"I think she will sleep now. The draught and your voice, Miss Grant, have conquered," and the nurse smiled.

"You seemed to know the best thing to do," said Mrs. Aldred. "I hope you will get a little sleep yourself as a reward for your kindly service. We all thank you."

"I am glad I could do it," and with one look at Daisy, Helen slipped quietly from the room.

She explained in a low tone that it had not been anything worse than a severe nervous fright. If it had not been a breach of the rules she felt

indisposed to talk even to Juliet. Did a lost love ever truly come back, she wondered.

The girls were bright enough the next morning and disposed to look at the amusing side of the adventure. Miss Bradshaw recounted her search for a man and a boat with the utmost spirit. They had saved their rhododendrons, and fortunately missed the brief shower. The morning was splendidly clear and somewhat cooler.

Mrs. Aldred announced that Miss Bell had no fever and only felt languid, but that she had advised her to remain in bed most of the day, and as she wished her kept quiet, she hoped the girls would refrain from calling on her.

There was shopping for trifles and mementos, calls of farewell to make on some of the residents, and still a little reviewing for a few of the last examinations.

Late in the afternoon Helen sat on the porch telling some of the younger division the story of the Golden Fleece. Miss Craven had gone downtown with the Gartney twins.

Mary came and paused in the doorway waiting for the story to be finished. Then coming forward she said :

"Miss Grant, Miss Bell would like to see you.

She feels quite well, but rather weak, and will not come down to dinner."

Helen rose and walked slowly upstairs. She had been wondering how they would meet, if they would go back to the old indifferent politeness. She tapped at the door and there was a great throb in her throat.

"Come," answered a tremulous voice.

Daisy Bell was pillowed up in the bed, her soft shining hair wound around her head like a crown, with a few stray ends shadowing her forehead. She was still very pale, but her eyes were mysteriously wistful. She nodded and motioned Helen to a seat near the bed, and for a moment or so neither spoke.

"Nurse Mary told me what a time I made in the night, and insisted on having you. It's queer, but it is all like the ends of a confused dream to me. And you sent me to sleep with the old poem—"

"The medicine deserves some credit," interrupted Helen.

Daisy put out her hand. "Helen," she murmured pleadingly.

Helen took it, leaned over and kissed her and both cried a little in girl fashion. Then Helen

said—"Oh, don't, dear, you will make yourself ill again."

"I must say it. I've been mean and ungenerous and yes, untruthful, for I allowed mamma to believe what was not so. I might have corrected the mistake, but I was too angry. I've been very unhappy, too. Sometimes I have not loved you a bit, then I have wanted you so much and envied that girl who has all your heart."

"She has not all of it. She knows there are several others, but she has her share and is content. And I wish dozens of people loved her."

"I want to tell you how I came to misunderstand at first. Miss Craven was describing her visit with you to Miss Wiley, then she turned to me and said,—'I spent Christmas at Hope with your friend Miss Grant,' and I turned rudely away. I saw it all in a flash. You would not come to me because you had planned to have her—the last visit before you went away—"

"Oh, Daisy!" cried the listener in pained entreaty. "It was not so—"

"Yes, I know now. She tried to explain but I would not listen. She sent a note and I returned it unopened. Then I wrote to you. I was so angry that I did not care what I said.

And in your answer I thought I saw proof of duplicity. And I told mamma what was not really true, then I was frightened lest you should write the other side of the affair."

Helen thought of the letter she had written and destroyed, and was thankful she had kept silent.

"You are very noble and generous. I am selfish and jealous. Though it doesn't seem as if I had ever been jealous of any one else. And last night in the boat—of course there wasn't any real danger for we could easily have waded ashore, but the moments of waiting seemed so long. It was so still and solemn with the stars reading your very thoughts. You know it is said a drowning man can think over his whole life in one fateful moment. It came to me that if I were dying suddenly there were some things I should want different. I should want mamma to know how unjust I had been to you. I was so surprised at your return here, and though I would have given anything to come back to you, I kept saying to myself you did not care, that you had no real love for me, and so I was cold and distant. In the night I had a dreadful dream. I seemed going round and round in a whirlpool, and every time I passed you I tried

to catch your hand, but each time I missed it until it seemed as if I was swallowed up in the sea and everything was crashing to pieces."

"That was the terrible clap of thunder. There was only a very brief shower."

"I am glad it did not come while we were in the boat. I think I should have gone crazy."

"You should have heard Miss Bradshaw describe the episode this morning and her search for a boy and a boat. It was very amusing," and Helen tried to smile.

"Helen," in a low, tremulous tone, "will you take me back and let us begin over again?"

Ah, how blessed that there are places in life where one can begin over again, that God has made this possible!

Helen leaned over and kissed her but neither of them spoke. Both hearts were full.

"I don't suppose you will ever love me best of all again?" Daisy questioned tentatively.

"I wonder if there is any best of all to me;" and Helen's eyes deepened with thoughtfulness. "There are so many splendid things in the world, so many lovely people. God's beautiful earth and the many souls He has put here to be loved and comforted. How can one refuse? We are not to turn away from those in need."

"Helen," in a slow awed tone, "are you religious?"

"I don't quite know what is meant by that. It is a life work, and it is like other lessons you do not always catch the true meaning of at first. But I try not to do the things to others that I would not like them to do to me. That is a good rule to go by and some of the old world philosophers considered it among the best precepts. But the Golden Rule is better, nobler."

"It must be hard to be always trying to reach a high ideal," Daisy sighed.

Helen wondered a little what her ideals were, or if she had anything nobler than the wish to make others happy. She hoped never to think wholly of herself and her own pursuits.

"Mamma and Marjorie are coming on Wednesday. They will stay at the hotel. Papa hopes to come up in the morning. I'm glad to be friends again," pressing the hand she held to her cheek. "And I will try not to envy Miss Craven. I don't seem to mind any one else."

"Oh, don't envy her. You have your delightful home and relatives, and she has no one. The only real friend she has made has an invalid husband, and they must travel for his health. Her guardian and his wife are very worldly peo-

ple. Aldred House is the happiest home she has ever known. And she really has not the faculty of making the best of herself."

"And she isn't pretty." Daisy found a great compensation in that.

"Some girls are very attractive without being pretty. She is too retiring, too doubtful of her own powers. You see she was brought up in such a solitary manner—"

"But there is no end of money, I have heard."

"She doesn't want her money regarded as her chief attraction."

Daisy was half inclined to say that it was, but nurse Mary came up with a tempting supper, and remarked that she had talked quite long enough, as they wanted her to save her strength for to-morrow. Helen rose with her cheerful smile and uttered some heartfelt wishes. She was thankful that the breach had been healed, but not satisfied with herself. Had her father's severe training rendered her quicker to see small defects and superficialities? She really wanted to love Daisy with the olden regard, now more than ever, yet it seemed as if she had gone past her. Mrs. Aldred had said a friendship might be out-grown, was that what had happened?

Daisy had quite an ovation when she came

down the next morning. Her place at the table was fragrant with flowers and everybody sent her smiles and cordial greetings. She did enjoy the attention very much, and though rather pale was soon her charming olden self.

It was a very busy day with the arranging of all the flowers that could be safely put in their places, and the rooms resembled gardens. Then several of the girls who expected friends went down to the train. Miss Bradshaw's brother and sister-in-law had come and were to take her with them on a Canadian tour, hoping that a summer of pleasure would change her plan of burying herself four years in college life.

Helen looked at the happy, vigorous girl with new interest. She thought she would like just such a friend.

And there were Mrs. Bell and Marjorie, a rather tall, slim girl with a sweet, tender face like her mother. Mrs. Bell pressed Helen's hand with a warmth the girl understood. Marjorie said:

"Miss Helen, I should know you anywhere from father's description of you. I believe half his desire to come up here to-morrow is to see you."

Helen flushed with pleasure, thankful from

the depths of her heart that she was to keep these dear friends.

They were escorted to the hotel in quite a triumphant manner. Daisy, Helen and Miss Bradshaw were to remain to dinner. Daisy and Marjorie were seated together, there were so many things to talk over. Helen was on the other side of Mrs. Bell.

"I was glad to hear that you had come to Aldred House," she said. "I see you and Daisy have made up your little misunderstanding. Daisy is very quick to resent at times. And we all sympathize so with you in your sorrow. But you did not need to go to Rome a prisoner."

"Nor even to London. But I took a good deal of comfort in the brave old Apostle," and as she glanced up there was a misty softness in her eyes.

"We should all have been so sorry to have you go. It was not quite such a grief as if you had been your father's companion for years, but there is a pang in every broken tie. And we all rejoice that you can follow out your wish to go to college."

"I am sometimes afraid the difficulties have been turned aside too easily. I *was* unwilling in my heart to go away. The future looked dreary

to me. I like eagerness and action and earnest, living people and the delight that comes from real companionship. And I can't help feeling glad and thankful that I am a girl. I do not desire to be an abstruse, profound, and erudite pundit, I want to know the things of to-day and do the work of to-day if I can."

Mrs. Bell smiled. Her earnest endeavor would be doing rather than dreaming or enjoying. Yet she would be capable of all the sweetness and delight that hallowed any woman's life. Would she miss it if she thrust it aside?

After dinner they all went over to Aldred House. There were several other callers. Helen managed that Mrs. Bell should meet Miss Craven, who was quite at her best this evening. Helen was glad that she had overcome her fear of strangers to so great a degree.

The house was really crowded the next day. Some one said it was an ideal girls' temple of learning. Certainly it had been made beautiful with trailing vines and flowers, and the girls were all simply gowned in white. It was one of the regulations that there should be no extravagant dressing on this occasion. Helen felt like her olden self. It seemed only the other day when she sat among the juniors, a little girl in short

skirts, wondering at the events that happened to her and brought her here. There were so many new girls, and a number of the older ones had gone.

There was some fine music. Miss Craven played an exquisite Fantasia. There was a salutatory in verse; Miss Bradshaw ably descanted on the hopes of college life; one of the graduates took the Home for her theme and made it very attractive. Mrs. Aldred gave the closing address to the graduates. It was full of practical thought, of the discrimination needed to make a success in any calling, in understanding and admitting one's own limitations even if it brought a pang of disappointed ambition. Men were not fitted for every walk in life, and there were many failures from taking up the wrong pursuits. In friendship as well much care was needed, especially among young girls. A well-balanced mother was the truest and best confidant one could have, and the finest motive to an earnest life was to assist those who were earnestly trying to attain some worthy purpose. The fine thought that could divine what such a one needed and give generously of sympathy and hope and help to bridge over the rough places was the true work of a life set in high aims, since no beneficent

life was ever lived wholly to itself, and the education which had something uplifting to give to those around us was the most complete.

The out-of-doors fête was delightful. Little tables of refreshment were set here and there. It seemed partly an ovation to Mrs. Aldred, as neighbors and friends came to congratulate her. Girls were expressing sorrow at parting and there were promises of writing and visits.

Daisy Bell seemed a universal favorite, and Helen watched her with a curious, questioning mood. She had no one particular gift or genius, she was pretty and graceful and appealing, but every one offered her a delightful kind of admiration, and she accepted it quite as her right with a dainty sweetness. If she could sip of the refreshment of so many hearts, why should she not allow the same freedom to others?

Helen was very much interested in Marjorie, who declared with a grave light in her eyes that Daisy was quite spoiled at school as well as at home, and she would look for the world to be all rose-color and perhaps find many disappointments.

"But she has such a lovely home and parents," Helen said with a sound of longing in her voice,

"that I do not see how any sorrow can happen to her. She will have so much to enjoy."

"She seems to have had a great deal here. It is a pity she hasn't a younger sister to take an interest in, to keep her from thinking there is something more to life than mere personal enjoyment. I liked the last part of your Mrs. Aldred's talk so much, it was all good, but no one does or ought to live for himself or herself. Mother had a feeling that you would make such a fine balance wheel for her, but you have had to be away all the year. I am not sure that it is just the thing to expect or desire others to do for your own. But we all give a little. An English poet said years ago—

'We all can bring a little love to mend the world.'
I often think of it. And Miss Grant, I am counting on your visit to us this summer. You know I missed your other one."

She had promised last night to give a fortnight to the Bells later in the summer. After a few days spent in New York they were to take a trip eastward. Helen felt this would be a great pleasure, and she would compass it some way.

The hours really were too short, and the farewells came before half had been said.

"Come up to my room while I am changing my dress," cried Daisy. "I've hardly seen you, there has been so much to-day. It was just lovely, wasn't it? I'm truly sorry not to come back. Oh, if I could be two people and one body could spend the next year here and the other have lots of fun and frolic and good times! Now that I've found you again I hate to give you up."

Yet all day she had only thrown crumbs as it were to Helen.

Now she put her arm around her and drew her along. There stood the open trunk waiting the last garments. Mary had packed it. There was a box of books and "traps," nailed up and labeled. Her traveling suit hung over a chair.

"I want you to write real often. We mustn't let any new break come. I'm afraid you will not have a very gay time if your friend is an invalid. Helen, it's funny that there is some one always ready to ask something of you and plan out your life! And then somehow they die. It would be horrid if this friend did."

"Oh, don't!" Helen cried.

Marjorie came up to the room.

"Oh, you are a dear, just fold my dress, won't you? Helen wouldn't know what to do with the

furlongs. We were saying a little preparatory good-bye."

"Finish it going to the train, for you have scarcely a moment to spare. I hope Helen will kindly accompany us."

"Oh, yes—to the latest moment," returned Daisy laughingly, pinning on her hat in which she looked more bewitching than ever. Marjorie snapped the trunk lid and they went down stairs where there were some more good-byes to be said, though there was quite a procession going to the train.

So Daisy was divided about again. Helen hardly knew whether she felt pleased or sorry. She had been almost sure there would be an overflow of sentiment on Daisy's part, after their tender reconciliation. But it had been hurrying and scurrying, laughing and jesting with one and another; perhaps this was best.

The wagon hurried down with its load of trunks. The train came shrieking into the station.

"I shall write and tell you all about the commencement," said Daisy. "I hate to say good-bye. Oh, I want you, dear, dear girl, you sweet, splendid friend, to love me! Love me always."

Then the train whistled and went on. Helen

joined the other girls and walked back in a curious mood, trying not to believe there was a small pang at her heart.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEXT HAPPENINGS

EACH ONE of the few who remained felt languid, but nearly half of the school had gone. Miss Craven devoted the early evening to her two little girls whose father was to come for them to-morrow. Helen and several others sat out on the porch in the moonlight, but the talk went on without her. She could not just tell why her heart was heavy. She had her dear friend Mrs. Bell, nothing could happen that would shut her out again. She would have a splendid year at school and her strongest wishes granted—she would go to college without any worriment of mind, what then disturbed her?

The wisdom of this world often comes with a pang since it is brought with experience. She smiled a little to herself, but it was not joyful, and she could not all at once cast out the bitterness. But why should there be any bitterness? Had she been so thoroughly imbued with trust in Daisy's friendship even before the break in the winter? She was volatile and careless, but

very sweet. The present mood dominated her to the exclusion of most other demands. Helen had taken her back so loyally after her fright and faltering confession, had almost wished that she could give the very best of herself, and after all, it had been only one of many things to Daisy. Was she jealous, Helen queried of herself? No, truly she did not wish the first place in Daisy's heart. But it hurt her to be so lightly tossed aside even momentarily. She had been questioning whether she should not have been more frank about her summering, for she had left out the explanation that Miss Craven had been included, lest it might mar the newly mended friendship. She would never trouble again as to whether she should place Juliet's friendship on a higher round—it had made the place for itself just as truth and steadfastness are sure to.

"I shall always be one of many to Daisy," she said to herself and it absolved her troubled conscience.

The house was being stripped of faded vines and flowers the next morning and another relay of girls went away. Mrs. Wiley was to spend a year in Europe chaperoning three motherless girls, but Miss Wiley would keep her position, although Miss Grace Aldred would take her

former place. Already there had been some applications for the coming year; the boarding department was likely to be filled up rapidly.

Mr. Gartney came for his little girls. He asked to see Miss Craven.

"I hardly know how to thank you," he said, "for showing the children so much kindness. Their letters have been full of delight in the enjoyment you have given them, and they have improved very much. I thought at first you must be on the teaching staff, it is so unusual for an elder scholar to take such an interest in the younger ones. Accept my earnest gratitude. And I was glad to hear that they would have your influence and affection another year."

Juliet Craven colored with pleasure though she answered a little awkwardly; the praise was so sincere.

"So I shall be thankful to bring them back. I dare say they are wishing there was no vacation. Come midgets, say good-bye."

They said it with tears and tender embraces. There were tears too in Juliet's eyes.

"You would do for a head mother in an orphan asylum," began Helen as they walked back through the hall. "I am glad you have had some human beings to love. For though you may

adore pictures and dote on precious books they are not quite humanity."

"They were so sad and lonely. I can't quite understand how any woman can wish to turn children out of their father's heart when it is large enough to hold them all."

"He should not have allowed them to be turned out," Helen declared warmly.

"I think he hasn't *quite*. He seemed delighted to see them. But it looks as if there was hardly room in the home for them. And the new mother cannot care to see them since they are not to go home, but to an almost stranger. I hope the aunt has a tender place in her heart."

"You have dropped down on quite a romance," and Helen smiled. There was a flush on Juliet's cheek and a light, half of indignation, in her eyes that gave them a new force.

"I'd like to have them for two little sisters. If they had neither father nor mother—"

"Oh, Juliet, I hope you will not adopt a whole orphan asylum. I don't want to be crowded out;" and the pretty light in her eyes was half teasing.

"There is no fear. You are my first love. I shall never find a girl like you again. But I do not want to take all and crowd others out."

"You need not fear. You will not crowd anybody."

Miss Craven was to go to Hope with Helen. Her friend, Mrs. Howard, was in the Adirondacks nursing her husband through the fluctuations of his disease. There appeared little chance of his recovery.

It seemed to Helen that she must have been away a much longer time, judging from her own experiences, and yet there were very few changes. There were the same stores, the same picturesquely shaded streets, some of the houses rejoicing in a new coat of paint, others shabby. She recalled the Saturday so long ago that she had been sent over to shop and all the events that had grown out of it.

She met Mr. Walters, who greeted her delightedly. His book had created considerable interest from the advance sheets, and orders were coming in. His pride and joy were really infectious.

"It will owe much of its success to you and your father. I do believe I should only have dreamed over it all the rest of my life, but your vigor inspired me," he declared.

Helen's eyes sparkled with delight. Mrs. Walters was overjoyed to see her.

"I do believe husband has gone back a good

half dozen years," she said. "Don't you notice how bright and young he looks? His journey last winter did him a world of good and roused him up. And that book has been a powerful tonic."

Mrs. Dayton had aged a little but was as warm-hearted as ever. There were only a few boarders, old friends.

"I could have had a houseful but I thought I wouldn't bother. There's no one for me to make money and lay up for, though cousins to the tenth degree are ready enough to lay claim to the little you leave behind."

Mr. Warfield had gone away the day before her return, and on Saturday had sailed for Europe.

"I think he ought to pick up some nice wife to keep him from growing queerer. He isn't half as bright and jolly as he used to be, but I do suppose the big boys are trying."

"And the girls might be, too," laughed Helen.

Mr. Wilmarth had made all arrangements for the summering. The cottage was on the great South Bay on Long Island. Some acquaintances had gone there, so they really would not be lonesome. There was a man to do the rough work and care for the horse, and Mrs. Wilmarth would

take their own servant. The cottage was fairly well furnished, and a piano had been hired. Everything was ready for them to go in and take possession.

"I have been so afraid something would happen to change your mind," Mrs. Wilmarth declared with her affectionate greeting. "It does seem hard to take you away from Mrs. Dayton, and I expect your aunt will think me as much of an evil genius as Mrs. Van Dorn. But if I couldn't have had you I do believe I should have given up the struggle, though the doctor insists that I am better."

"And you certainly *do* look improved," returned the young girl eagerly.

"I didn't want to look ungrateful when you are going to be so good as to devote the next ten weeks to me. But I wish—oh, Helen, what fascination is there about college life for you young girls? I'd like you to be my girl instead. I could provide for you—"

"You are all so good to me. I wonder if ever any girl found so many friends?"

"You deserve them all. I think you win them yourself," and the tender tone touched her.

Helen smiled with luminous eyes.

Miss Craven was to stay with Mrs. Wilmarth

while Helen went to her aunt's, that they might get used to each other, the girl said laughingly.

They were all so glad to see her that Helen's heart almost failed her though she had explained her plans by letter some time before. Uncle Jason greeted her with such fatherly love that it fairly melted her heart. Aunt Jane was distinctly captious, yet she could not hide her interest and affection. Nat was full of joy and had so many improvements to explain to her. Joe Northrup, he admitted, gave him good suggestions.

"We're going to be the two best farmers anywhere around here!" he exclaimed with pride. "There's no sense in folks dropping down so and saying there isn't money in this or that. Half the men are too lazy to dig up the money. Father's mighty pleased, I can tell you. I don't believe the Cummings blood had all the virtues;" and he laughed with a joyous ring.

He was getting to be quite fine and intelligent-looking. Education *did* make a difference.

The younger children were doing well. Aurelia had grown prettier, but otherwise she seemed a hopeless case.

Jenny and Joe Northrup were prospering. Baby Helen was good-natured and smiled at the

slightest encouragement, while little Joe was a sturdy boy.

Aunt Jane made the same old lament, that it was very hard Helen could go about everywhere and never have any time for her own folks, who had looked after her when there was no one else to lend a hand. And she didn't see any sense in spending money and years over book learning when one knew enough to get along in the world. And most women who had a chance married, and what they needed to know most of all was housekeeping and that you couldn't get out of books.

"But they are writing books on the best methods of housekeeping," declared Helen in a bright, gay tone. "And in the cities they are teaching it to the poor women who have had to work in shops and factories all their young lives."

"Jenny worked in a shop and I'll risk any one finding a better housekeeper if they'd studied a thousand books!" was the decisive answer.

There was no use arguing. Aunt Jane would be "set in her ways" and beliefs to the end of the chapter.

Helen wondered if it was quite fair to turn from these olden friends to newer, more delightful ways! For she *did* find more pleasure in

them, more satisfaction. She was different from most of the girls she saw plainly. Now the talk ran largely on beaux and fun and how gowns were to be made, and oh, how glad half a dozen of them were that they had graduated and there was no more tiresome old school. Westchester was on a much higher intellectual plane. Mrs. Wilmarth sighed a little about it.

But there was no changing of the plan, and when Helen's visits were finished she said goodbye with a lingering touch of sadness.

"Do not think me ungrateful—" her arms were around Mrs. Dayton's neck. "All the good things of my life had their start here with you, and I do sometimes feel as if I ought to stay and be your daughter."

There was a glitter of tears on her bronze lashes and the lines about her mouth had a tempting indecision.

"I wish you *were*, Helen. I've wished it a good many times. But then you see you would be a different kind of girl. I think you have some of your father's qualities or you wouldn't have so much vigor and spirit and desire for knowledge. Then I see Uncle Jason's cheerfulness in you and your present enjoyment of things that keeps you bright and happy. And I do sup-

pose if this had not been just the career marked out by Providence for you it would not have shaped that way—”

Helen laughed as she interrupted. “But you know I would have come over here and worked for a home just for the chance of the high school. And I meant to work my way through college. O dear! What dreams I had! And I do owe a good deal to Mr. Warfield. I shall always feel grateful that he roused my dormant faculties.”

“He cares a great deal for you, Helen.” The girl flushed warmly.

“Oh, good-bye,” she cried, “and I will write to you every week.”

It was a very pleasant if tiresome journey to Mrs. Wilmarth. Her husband was on the lookout that everything should be made as easy as possible and the two girls were devoted to her, catching up a bit of brightness or amusement. Helen saw so many things that somehow were tinted and textured by her fairy wand, as Mr. Wilmarth called her cheerfulness.

After they left the train there was a drive. Mr. Wilmarth disdained the stage and took the rather shabby rockaway. “Drive round by the bay,” he said.

They passed the main street on which there

were two hotels and several really fine houses. A quarter of a mile perhaps and then they were on the beach road with the bay spread out before them, the narrow strip of sand that half enclosed it and the broad, glittering ocean that met the sky line and was lost in the commingling of tints. The air came up with a full strong breath of glorious life gathered from the boundless space.

"It is magnificent and solemn, changing and yet with a sense of immutability. Think of the hundreds of years it has ebbed and flowed just that way, touching the sky only to mortal ken, so near yet never meeting or greeting it."

Helen drew a long breath of rapture. Mrs. Wilmarth smiled. Miss Craven had a high look in her eyes as if her soul was touched to the depths.

"You girls can run down often," Mr. Wilmarth said. "Up there," nodding northward, "is a bathing house and a long shallow beach. And the drive up has many fine views, and some beautiful residences, as well. I wanted you to have this sight so that you could be satisfied in your sleep and your dreams. Now we will turn up, driver."

They passed a wind-break of trees, blown quite awry and stunted by the salt air. This was a rather sandy road with houses set here and there.

They crossed the avenue and glanced up and down. It was quite a pretty view. The next street was theirs, the house a short distance from the corner. It was a rambling story and a half affair that had been built onto in several directions, which gave it a queer aspect. There was quite a space in front with some shrubbery that had not done very well, or had not been cared for, and grassy patches where a sort of creeping vine had not quite smothered it. But there was a long piazza with a seat built up against the house and lattices here and there over which morning glories were rioting. One door opened directly into the parlor, a large room with old-fashioned hair-cloth covered furniture, an immense sofa, and a sort of nondescript carpet that time had softened to a very tolerable aspect.

Katy had come down a few days before with some boxes and easy chairs that had been disposed about. She gave them a warm welcome. Mrs. Wilmarth sank down amid the cushions Katy had piled on the sofa. Helen took her hat and drew off her gloves.

"You are very tired," she said in her soft comforting voice, toned to suit the occasion. "And now you are to have two maids to wait upon

you, and Katy to see that everything goes straight and we do not starve."

"It's very primitive, isn't it?" with a faint smile. "If you girls do not weary of it—"

"Oh, we shall never tire of the glorious old ocean! It is my first real sight of it. And after all I do not think all the Hopes are in such an advanced state of æsthetic culture that we shall miss so very much."

"And I have been primitive all the early period of my life," said Juliet. "I wonder if luxuries really do spoil one?"

"Not school luxuries exactly," returned Helen with a rather mirthful accent. "Now while you are resting may I indulge my curiosity in exploring? And must we draw lots or toss up a penny to see where we shall bide?"

Out of the parlor was a large sleeping room. The rag carpet that adorned the floor was a work of art and so thick that it might have been an oriental rug. The furnishings were enough to set a lover of the antique crazy. A great bedstead of old mahogany with some rather quaint carving, a bureau large enough for a closet and almost as high as Helen's shoulders, another curious chest of drawers with a desk top, and a wardrobe of the same wood nearly black with

age. Fortunately the room was large enough not to seem dwarfed with these belongings.

A door opened into the adjoining room, which had a much more modern aspect. The curtains at the window were figured with pale blue vines and in this carpet the rags had before weaving been colored all the shades of blue that could be invented it seemed, and it was oddly pretty. This room as well as the parlor opened into the dining room, and from here there seemed innumerable kitchens, each one dropping a little in degree until back of the laundry was a woodshed.

"It's queer enough," began Katy. "And the old lady's queer, too. She lives in the kitchens in the winter. There was a big family it seems, but they've mostly gone away or are dead. She has one married daughter living in the village and in the summer she hires out the house and lives with her, and in the winter a grandson comes over and lives with *her*. Some people came here in April and went out in June or Mr. Wilmarth wouldn't have struck it. The old lady doesn't see what folks want to be traveling round all the time for, though she admits it brings in money to those who have places to rent. She looks as if she might be a hundred, but she's keen, I tell you. Do you want to go up stairs?

There's two rooms and a garret most stuffed full of things in barrels and boxes."

The girls concluded that they would save the garret for the next day. Katy's kitchen was full of appetizing smells and she said laughingly, "I do hope you are good and hungry."

"As hungry as the traditional bear. I suppose he made the remark after his winter's nap."

Mr. Wilmarth had been superintending the removal of the trunks and the opening of a few boxes and now sat beside his wife with traces of solicitude in his countenance.

"Well," and he glanced inquiringly at the girls as they entered the room, "how are you going to like it? I could have had a more modern house farther back, but I wanted you to be near the beach. It is a little queer."

"That will serve to entertain us," said Helen. "And the ocean is new to us."

"There are some fine drives about. Well, perhaps that isn't exactly the word," smilingly, "but there are some beautiful new places, estates really, they are on such a large scale. It is more a colony of homes than a boarding place, and there are a good many of the old settlers left, and the picturesque fishermen and boats break the monotony. I have a man engaged to come twice a

week, or oftener if you want him to drive you about."

Katy announced dinner. The girls did it full justice, but Mrs. Wilmarth was too tired for feasting. Afterward, Mr. Wilmarth brought the reclining chair out on the porch, and wrapping up his wife so that she might not feel any chill, they had an entertaining talk. Even here you could catch the sound of the waves tramping up on the beach. And how the stars shone on their background of deepest azure. A few insects were chirping, and one or two odd ones were making a long whir that was quite new to them.

They were bright and rested the next morning and arranged their favorite belongings with the books they had brought, and the few photographs and dainty bric-a-brac.

"There will be no room for pictures," Mrs. Wilmarth said. "In my experience of country houses people are very much attached to their own adornments and do not want you to disturb them."

Helen made a comical face as she glanced about the room. There were George and Martha Washington, Cornwallis surrendering his sword, Andrew Jackson sitting on the porch at the Hermitage with two really fine dogs. The capture

of Major André, an old painting of an ancestor who was in the battle of Long Island, another of a captain lost at sea and several family photographs.

"We may be allowed to cover them with pale green net to keep off the flies and lend a kind of softened suggestiveness to them," said Helen. "Worthy as the subjects are, I should not like to live with them all the year round."

Mrs. Green, the owner of the premises, came down to see her new tenants. She was rather a small person with a very shrunken appearance, much wrinkled and with the brown tan of years of seaside. Her cambric gown was extremely clean, her gingham sunbonnet starched very stiff, and her small face seemed almost lost in it.

Entertaining she certainly was with her quaint, obsolete words sprinkled here and there, and her shrewd comments on the changes since she was a girl and the village was three or four large farms, and everybody's husband and sons were fishermen, and the women and children looked after the out-of-door work. Her grandfather had been one of the old men and built the middle of the house, her father had added two rooms, her husband had built on some more. One of her sons was in Colorado, the other was mate of a vessel,

one daughter was in Nova Scotia, where her husband was in canning business, the youngest was married here. They had all made the house over to her. "Of course they know some of 'em will get it back, the gals most likely. Men have ten chances in this world to a woman's one, an' I hold if there's anything to leave, 'specially if 'taint very much, the gals ought to have it. You look young, mum, to have grown up daughters."

"They are not mine," returned Mrs. Wilmarth. "I could wish they were."

"Well, it's a great responsibility to get 'em married off to your likin'. Now I'd ruther Harriet would 'a married Sam Baldwin who has a big farm ten miles or so above here and is makin' money hand over fist. But no one would do her but that Andrew Mack and to go off where no one could ever get at her. There ain't much to choose from round here—"

"And these girls have to go back to school," interposed Mrs. Wilmarth.

"Well now, I should think they'd better be learnin' how to keep house. Gals don't seem to take to work now-a-days, but they'll play with knocking balls into holes over there in the field and chase through the hot sun, and I'll be bound it would half kill 'em to sweep a room or cook a

dinner. You can have what vegetables you want out of the garden, an' I hope you'll be satisfied and not find fault with everything. I hate fault-finding people. 'An' I'll come over again to see how you get along."

CHAPTER V

WHAT THE OCEAN SAID

MRS. GREEN trotted off abruptly. Then they went down to the beach. The tide was going out and every wave left behind sands that in this morning sunshine sparkled with gems of imagination, Helen averred. Did the waves carry that crest off to other lands? The wonderful boundlessness stirred the depths of Helen's soul. Would she be following the mysterious track sometime? Life had been full of surprises to her, would they go on and on?

"The air is invigorating," Mrs. Wilmarth said. "People do need changes, I suppose. The quiet of Hope was restful at first. Oh, do you suppose I shall turn into a discontented old woman?"

"You will have to wait a long time first, and even now you are going to renew your youth."

Mrs. Wilmarth smiled. "You cannot realize how glad I am to have you back. Yes, I wish more than ever that you really belonged to me. And I suppose Mrs. Dayton is saying the same thing. I try to study out the charm."

"Have I such a wonderful gift? I think it is because people need just what I can give them. You see their need rounds it out."

"Or the reverse," tenderly. "They do need what you give so generously. The world is full of needs."

"I am glad to have anything to bestow."

The elder was thinking that while Miss Craven might charm with her exquisite playing this girl had the light and spirit that entered into true living.

Mr. Wilmarth halted. "You must begin bathing to-morrow," he said to his wife. "I am anxious to see how you stand it. And I must look up some experienced person to watch over you when I am not here. Helen, you ought to learn to swim."

"That would be simply glorious!" and her eyes sparkled while her heart beat joyfully. Juliet gave a shiver.

"Would you be afraid?" he asked rather teasingly.

"Yes, I should, I do not believe I would ever have the courage to cross the ocean for all the wonderful things on the other side. It seems to stretch so far, to such immeasurable distances. I never realized it before, but then I never saw it

in all its majesty. No, I couldn't learn to swim. I do not believe I want to trust myself to it at all. It seems so—so stealthy."

"And I like the far off distance. Why I should like to be out there where sky and ocean meet. Juliet, you must have waded in a brook when you were little! And you have gone out on the river," said Helen earnestly, almost upbraidingly.

"But the river is so different," protested Juliet.

"I used to like sea bathing years ago. It is very exhilarating. And if it will strengthen me, I shall be glad. You will not be afraid, Helen."

"Oh, no, no!" clasping her friend's hand.

They walked along the beach. It dried so quickly in the summer sun. Here and there was a boat or bathing house, but it was not a fashion resort. Presently they turned homeward. Helen had a handful of curious shells and said next time they would bring a basket.

Up above a short distance there was a strip of woods, rather scrubby pines nearest the shore, but increasing in size and dignity as they crept inland. It almost seemed as if the island might end there.

"I am glad there are some woods. And it is not too far for a nice walk, for me, at least," Helen began.

"We will go over and explore it. There are sometimes terrible forest fires, for the wind has a terrific sweep. Since you are so fond of walking, suppose we send these delicate pilgrims home and I show you around the little town and where to find the post office. Then we will see Hiram Seton about the carriage. You are quite an expert at driving, I believe."

"I can drive an ordinary old nag," laughed Helen. "These heavy roads would not favor runaways."

So they turned off and went along the main street that presently began to show a business aspect. There was a grocery store, a drygoods and millinery establishment, bakery, and several other suggestions of trade, quite a pretentious country hotel and livery, and looking east about a block, a small wharf and boathouse, and a fishing rendezvous. There was a certain lively air about the place. A little farther up on some rising ground stood a neat chapel.

"One wouldn't care to spend his life here, though this really is only a little off-shoot of Balem proper, East Balem, not large enough for a name of its own. Balem is quite a town. Sometime, I dare say, it will be all towns and seaside resorts."

"It must be rather dreary in winter. I am afraid I am getting spoiled even for Hope," and Helen gave a bright smile.

They found the post office and a news stand. There were no letters as yet. Then they interviewed Hiram Seton, the landlord of the hotel, who promised to have the carriage over at three.

The drive through the country was really beautiful as they went up farther toward the centre of the island. They passed several pretty towns. There were substantial farm houses and well cultivated fields; indeed some of the market gardens were very attractive, kept in the neatest and most profitable order.

That evening their nearest neighbor came over. She was a bright, wholesome-looking woman who had taken the training of a nurse when thrown on her own resources, and now had several semi-invalids under her care, sent from the city for convalescence. In fact, it was the security this afforded that had decided the Wilmarths in taking the place, since Mrs. Wilmarth did not feel able to endure the stress of much social life.

Mrs. Ballinger was well informed and really attractive with the sort of magnetism that drew one gently, and was not in the least insistent. She spoke of some of the neighbors in a very

pleasant manner far removed from invidious gossip. In the newer houses the owners never spent the winter. Only the old inhabitants whose business was here or who had been here for generations had the courage to remain.

"And you?" inquired Mrs. Wilmarth suggestively.

"Oh, I generally take a short holiday, run up to the city to hear a little good music and see my friends, and have various amusements. Though last winter I had three patients who stayed nearly all January. There are some splendid views in winter, only the evenings are apt to grow monotonous. I see you have provided music for your young people. There are some delightful girls in that large pale green house just above here, and they give one or two musicales or entertainments for the benefit of the chapel. That is Rolfe avenue, and Squire Rolfe, as he is called, once owned it from the woods down to the chapel. And he has a keen eye for the future of the place, for he will only allow really fine houses to be erected on it."

"About the girls?" inquired Helen with a smile.

"There are seven Travis children, little and big; two daughters and one son grown up. Elsie Travis is engaged this summer. Jim, as they

call him, is in college, Annie comes next, then two big boys, and lastly two little girls. They are really pleasant and unassuming. And they nearly always have some cousins staying with them. Large families find so much entertainment."

Then they discussed the bathing. There was also some boating. Parties often went over on the opposite beach and had picnics in the afternoons. Or they went yachting to Fire Island Light and took real ocean trips.

"The young folks will find enough to keep them from getting homesick then," said Mr. Wilmarth. "And if you will keep a little oversight of my wife when I am away, as I shall not be able to spend all the time here, I shall feel much easier in mind."

Mrs. Ballinger promised cordially.

The very next day the young people came over from Rolfe avenue, two Travis girls, a Miss Grenfell, and two young men. Mrs. Wilmarth was much pleased with them, and Helen affiliated with them at once. They had a lawn tennis court, and about half a mile away there were golf links, but Jim was the only one who patronized them.

"There are so many things to do," said Miss Elsie, "and it seems as if you came to the country

in the summer to rest a little, to swing in hammocks and read, and not dissipate all the time. I'm fond of talking over books and pictures and getting other people's ideas, and I paint a little and practice my music and embroider. Which is the musician here, or are you both?"

Helen disclaimed any great proficiency. Miss Travis went over to Juliet, and they soon found they had similar tastes. She was charming, too, to Mrs. Wilmarth, and invited them all up to afternoon tea, which they often had on the large piazza. They were fond of living out-of-doors.

"I am delighted," Mrs. Wilmarth said after they were gone. "I was afraid we might find ourselves a little lonesome."

"If I felt any such malady threatening me I should go and have a chat or a race with old Neptune," laughed Helen.

Indeed, the fortnight Mr. Wilmarth spent they were really very gay. One picnic over on the beach, and several sails and drives seemed to fill up every available moment. Mrs. Wilmarth soon became accustomed to the bathing, and Helen reveled in it, but Juliet could not be persuaded to venture. The Travis girls were quite expert swimmers, and the younger boys were very daring.

One of the guests at Mrs. Ballinger's proved extremely interesting. She was slowly recovering from a severe accident, and was a young widow with moderate means. Indeed, Helen found herself relieved from much of the devotion she had set for herself. Mrs. Gilbert was fond of reading aloud, and she had moved in rather intellectual society. She took a great fancy to Juliet Craven, and thus for once Helen did not come first, and in her generous heart was delighted.

Mrs. Wilmarth improved every day. It was quite like the olden times of health.

There were many things to amuse as well. Helen found some people queerer than those at Hope. They seemed to have the flavor of the salt air which was different from inland towns. Their weather-beaten look left them sharp and shrewd, and full of subtle speeches that you had to think a moment or two about to discern the real meaning. There was something in the laugh as well, a sort of inner astuteness that sometimes puzzled her. Country people were not all alike. Environment stood for a good deal after all. She felt that her experiences were broadening.

One day at the post office she found among her letters one from Daisy Bell. Why had she almost

forgotten her in this rush of new experiences? It had gone to Hope and been re-mailed. It was a full month since they had parted. She could not have written for she did not know Daisy's address. Yet, with her earnest nature she felt a little conscience-smitten that she had not thought more about her.

Daisy was having a splendid time. They had gone to Portland, then up among the islands, and to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec, and Montreal and the splendid Falls, where they would spend a week or more. Mr. Lawrence Hollis had joined them, and now he was really Marjorie's accepted lover. Annis and her husband were coming. Then they would go on to Detroit and Chicago. Traveling about was the most fascinating thing in the world. You met so many charming people. "I've made up my mind that I shall marry a very rich man who loves to travel. I'll go to Europe on my wedding tour and stay two years. Then there is that wonderful California and Japan, and I just feel as if I could keep going all my life. I envy the money that dull, queer Craven girl has, and she didn't want to go to Europe! She'd be just as well content with half of it. If I were you I'd strike her for some nice journeys. What will she ever do with all

the money unless some man marries her for it? And where is the sense of her going to college!" gossiped Daisy.

"What are you doing? Did you go off with that invalid friend to some poky place where there are no young men? I've had some gay times and been a good deal admired, but mamma is quite a duenna. Still, there are odds and ends you can pick up. Of course Margie's rather serious as befits a prospective clergyman's wife, so I can't go to her with my bits of fun. When we get home I shall want you to come at once. I had a touch of sentiment about going to college, I was such a pet with two girls who graduated with that high purpose in view, but I'm so glad I do not care about it. I think men, the nice young men, wouldn't raise up their little finger for much learning in a woman, and they have an idea that most college girls are or will be old maids. Of course you want to graduate somewhere and have a diploma.

"There, I can't write another word, but I want a good long letter from you. Now that I really have renewed my hold on you I shall not let you go, and mamma thinks there is no girl quite like you for a nice, steady friend. Oh, I must tell you about Willard. A dear friend of papa's

offered him a position in his law office, but he had to go at once as they needed some help while the other two partners were away—one in Europe. It was very fine and complimentary, I believe, and papa quite insisted on his taking it, so the poor boy won't have any vacation until September. Good-bye, with oceans of love.

"DAISY."

Helen felt disappointed with the flippancy. And yet Daisy had a sweet and charming side to her nature.

The letter was easily answered. The Travis girls had introduced them to some nice acquaintances, and they had met others at the chapel. The clergyman was attractive and had a charming young wife who was a college graduate and who exhorted all girls who had any desire to go for the excellent training. It gave life a much wider outlook.

Then there had been one tremendous storm when it seemed as if the house would be blown farther inland or toppled over. They didn't wonder that trees grew awry. The rain was like a deluge. A night and a day, then another night and a dull gray morning with a cold wind. No bathing, and Mrs. Ballinger's "boy" brought up the mail.

Katy had cleared the asparagus branches and the fern leaves out of the dining room fire-place and built a splendid log fire that diffused a delightful warmth around. Mrs. Ballinger had run over to see if they were all safe. There had been a few leakages in the roof, and part of the garden fence had blown down. Helen had read and sung and talked and now the room was getting too strait for the energetic girl.

"I think I'll wrap up and take a little walk," she announced. "The fire has baked me red and brown, so I must try a turn out-of-doors to restore the equilibrium. Juliet?" inquiringly.

"I do not think I can be tempted. And you are crazy! The storm hasn't ended."

"There is a light streak in the west."

"But the wind is east."

"Oh Helen, don't go out. So near night, too," pleaded Mrs. Wilmarth.

"Just for a little run down to the bay, and a look at the wrecked bathing house. You will see how fresh I shall return. Think of staying in the house two whole days!"

She put on her rain cloak and drew the hood over her head, looking like a bright eyed gipsy as the red lining framed her in.

"I'm afraid to have you go. Do not let the

turbulent ocean draw you in and devour you and add to the rest of the wreckage."

Helen laughed and gave them each a kiss.

The two, both reticent by nature and made more so by circumstances, had reached a point of confidence and fell now and then into bits of early experiences. Mrs. Wilmarth's had been bright enough until the break in health came, but she seemed to understand Juliet's life readily. She, too, had longed for the solace of children that never came, and now realized that the need must be satisfied with companionship. Helen was all exhilaration to her, Juliet had a quiet charm as well as a need, and Mrs. Wilmarth had unconsciously learned Helen's lovely lesson of giving from her inmost heart. And Juliet, in some respects made older than her years, enjoyed the womanhood and the experience. There were many sides to one's nature she was finding.

Helen drew a long breath though the air was dull and heavy. The light streak in the west was dying out, and the cloudiness seemed to drop lower down, enveloping everything. The roar of the ocean was driven fiercely inland as if it were the cry of some mighty tragedy not yet finished, but was to go on until ended by that divine fiat, —"There shall be no more sea."



The great waves came on with their frothy, snowy-white crowns. — *Page 91.*

She turned up beside the bay. The sand had been tramped hard by the rain. The great waves with the wind back of them came on with their frothy, snowy-white crowns, losing a little of their force as they struck the sandy bar now submerged but still there, when it seemed as if it must be entirely swept away. What foundation did it rest upon—a bed of rocks? She was strongly moved by the mighty swells of sound running through octaves of mystery, bringing vague airs and refrains such as man could never transcribe.

Helen was so moved by the grandeur and strength that was incomprehensible to the finite understanding, that she tramped on in an uplifted frame of mind touched by the mighty power that of old had moved upon the face of the waters. There suddenly dropped down a vagueness, a sense of darkness, and she remembered it was getting late, so she turned. The wind had veered a little and was driving up a dense fog from the southeast. It looked like a mysterious army marching on to capture her. She must meet it of course. It was not armed with staves and spears, so she would not have to fight. She was fleet of foot and began to run, keeping up on the hard sand. It was a straight path, but after a few moments she could not see even the houses.

What if she should pass the street and go on too far? This must surely be it, and she turned quickly, coming with a sudden impact against another person, and would have fallen if the outstretched arms had not caught her.

• "Oh," she cried. "This is my street, or lane it is called. I am near home. Thank you."

"What an awful fog!" said the young man whom she had so unexpectedly encountered. "It grows more and more dense. I had a curiosity to see it down here on the bay, but sea and sky and land are all alike. Allow me to go back with you," and he took her arm.

"It is only a step." Her breath came in bounds. Never in her rambles, and she had often run out this way, for Juliet was not much in love with ocean, had she met with any one, and she was a little startled. What would he think of a girl being out alone on such a night!

"I had no idea of the fog coming up this way," she began, half in apology. "This is my street. Thank you for your courtesy. Good-night."

She disengaged her arm and the next moment was lost to view. The young man stood quite still but the footsteps soon ceased.

"Somewhere I have heard the voice," he said



to himself. It was connected with an inspiring incident that eluded him curiously.

Helen paused a moment on the door-step and resolved that she would not admit her adventure, since it might trouble Mrs. Wilmarth. She tripped to the kitchen door and threw off her cloak which was now quite wet.

"Oh, Miss Helen," cried Katy, "did you ever see such a fog! They were afraid you would not find your way home."

"Oh, it was a straight road," laughed Helen, "unless I had walked into the bay, and I *do* believe I should have felt the wetness of the water before I had gone very far."

"To be sure. But people sometimes get confused and do not know which way to turn."

"But I didn't get confused and am here safe and sound," in her merry tone.

The fire was burning on the hearth and the two ladies sat one side of it. The table stood at the other end, which gave them quite a space for a sitting room.

"I was beginning to feel troubled when Katy said there was such a fog," exclaimed Mrs. Wilmarth.

"It was splendid with the great ocean throwing up the white caps and bringing voices from

the other continent, or up from the depths. I went farther than I thought. But it wasn't the darkness of the coming night; it was the suddenness of the fog, and so I hurried home."

"And were you not afraid?" asked Juliet.

"Why, there was nothing to be afraid of. And I had a good run. But how desperately warm you are in here."

Her cheeks were glowing and her eyes brilliant, while the smile played about her lips.

"Yes, we will retire to the parlor after dinner."

"I surely was never meant for a sailor," said Juliet. "I wonder if I would ever have the courage to cross the ocean! If one could fly—"

"You might get caught in a storm even then," interposed Helen. "The poor gulls get badly beaten sometimes."

"Oh, you scarcely think of it on shipboard," exclaimed Mrs. Wilmarth. "And the voyage is not very long, after all. Think when it took a whole month, and in a sailing vessel at that!"

Katy announced that the dinner was served, but they went on talking of the journey that has such a glamour for most youthful years, and the beautiful old cities with their wonderful legends, most of them indeed history.

"Don't you remember, Helen, that Mrs. Wiley

told of a lady she knew who had met with a sad accident that confined her to an invalid chair, and how she traveled by maps and engravings and guide books, and was so well informed that it was delightful to visit her and talk over places? And that after awhile she began to have classes at her house and entertained them in a most charming manner?"

"A suggestion for me," declared Mrs. Wilmarth.

CHAPTER VI

ABOUT A YOUNG MAN

THEY went through to the parlor and Helen took up Mrs. Oliphant's "Florence," but just then there was a shuffling and a sound of voices and a knock.

Helen answered it.

"Do not be alarmed at this interruption on such a night," began Miss Travis in an amused tone. "I don't know when there has been such a fog, but the wind threatens now to tear it to tatters. We had some urgent business and we have brought along a friend of Jim's who insists that he knows you quite well, as your school is in his native town. Allow me to present Mr. Danforth."

Helen turned to meet a rather tall, fair young fellow with an energetic face and very earnest eyes. For a moment she could not place him, then she knew he must be the clergyman's son. Yet where and how had they met?

"Perhaps I ought not claim quite so much," he began with a hearty smile. "You were only

a little girl when I saw you, but some way you have become a great source of interest to my mother, and in that way I have heard a good deal about you. I am really glad to meet you in orthodox fashion. When they mentioned your name to-night I insisted upon being included in the call."

A bright color flashed up in Helen's face. It was the voice of her companion on the sands.

"You and Miss Grant shall renew acquaintance later on. We want her for a few moments now, and you must meet Mrs. Wilmarth and Miss Craven. Helen, we have been absolutely enveigled into a scheme, and if we cannot have everyone's consent we will not undertake it. Mother was quite opposed at first, but when she looked at the benevolent side, she yielded. You have heard us say that we always give an entertainment for the chapel before we go away. Mr. Seton came up this morning in all the storm. He heard we were going to have some private theatricals, and he proposes that we shall make them public and play for money instead of amusement. There is a very nice person down in the town whose husband was killed about two years ago. She has three children and does whatever sewing she can find to do. There is a nice cottage and

a garden, a snug little home for them, but the children are not old enough to earn any money. There is a mortgage of seven hundred dollars on the place and it has been unexpectedly called in. Her husband was a great favorite with the townspeople and they do many little things for her. A neighbor will take a new mortgage for five hundred dollars, so Mr. Seton determined if he could, to raise two hundred dollars. The real residents of the town are not rich by any means and the summer people are not especially interested in them. He thought if we would give the little play in his hall, which he will fix up for us, he is sure he could make at least fifty dollars, for already he has the promise of over twenty, at fifty cents a ticket. We talked it over for an hour or so and about consented."

"Why, I think it will be no end of fun," said Jim. "I hold up both hands for it."

"But there is another point for Helen's consideration. Jessie Mays was to take one of the leading parts, but she has been called home by some illness in the family. Annie would not do and she has a minor part. Two of our other guests declare they haven't the courage. So we have come to see if you wouldn't help us out

and be an actor instead of a spectator. You have such a good, clear voice."

Helen had taken part in two plays at school and really felt at home in the impersonations. She smiled a little.

"Now don't say no," begged Jim. "I am sure you can do it," and his tone was most persuasive.

"It's a short notice, but you have such a quick and retentive memory, and I do not believe you will suffer from stage fright."

Helen laughed at that. "But then," she said, "I have never played before a large audience."

"You should hear Mr. Seton's enthusiasm. He thinks it will be about the greatest thing the village ever had. Strolling players do not abound here as plentifully as in English novels."

"The players of to-day have been merged into circus performers, and there is too much paraphernalia for them to visit small places," said Mr. Danforth.

"And bring 'the elephant that eats all night'," appended Jim, with a laugh. "And you must have some catchy songs borrowed from anywhere."

Helen presently agreed to do her best.

"It's so good of you," replied Miss Travis

gratefully. "Will you come up to-morrow morning and let us run over the play?"

The young girl consented cheerfully.

"When will it take place?" asked Mrs. Wilmarth.

"Mr. Seton wants it next week. Oh, and we are to go down and give instructions about the stage. He will see to everything and selling the tickets, and promises to bring us home after the play is over."

"He must have it very deeply at heart."

"He surely has. And I hope they will make a hundred dollars."

Mr. James Travis was so devoted to Helen that Mr. Danforth could only have a word now and then, and their talk was in a general way about Westchester. The young man had been at a Technical school the last two years and through a cousin had come to know the Travis family well enough to accept an invitation from them.

As they were going away he paused beside Helen with a fine air of comradeship. "I want to see you for a good long talk to-morrow," he said in a low tone. "When I reached the house they were in an earnest discussion about this matter, and as soon as I heard your name I knew who the girl was that I met on the beach, and

I was all eagerness to verify my supposition."

Helen colored but made no admission.

The fog was clearing away and a brisk wind was blowing from the west.

"Come up as soon as you can in the morning," said Elsie Travis, with her good-night.

Then the three settled to a talk in true feminine fashion, much amused over the incident.

"I didn't know you had met that Mr. Danforth," began Juliet. "Why, it doesn't seem as if he had been home but a little while last summer, and you were not there. I have never seen him at the rectory, though I have heard his mother talk about him. They are very proud of him."

Helen gave a piquant half smile. "It was at the first lawn fête. And I was only a little girl in short skirts. I don't know what there was especially to remember. Oh, yes, I repeated Browning's poem of 'Herve Riel' out on a corner of the lawn to some girls, and he came to listen. It seems funny, doesn't it, how you stumble over people or they stumble over you?"

"And the power one has of impressing one's individuality on most of the people one meets! I could almost envy you, Helen, if I did not love you so well. I wonder if any one will ever re-

member me for a fortnight?" and Juliet gave a little sigh.

"I remember the evening you played and sang those lovely old songs, and that is quite a while ago," Mrs. Wilmarth returned with an appreciative light in her eyes.

"Oh, thank you," in a heartfelt tone.

"And I am interested in this play. Mr. Wilmarth is coming down on Saturday and will spend a fortnight. We used to go to plays when we were in the city, but we both liked only the fine and clean ones, and I think we preferred music. It is really a bit of philanthropy for Mr. Seton to take up this matter."

"And I am quite sure he would have to turn to the dictionary to find out what that long word meant."

"So long as he has it in his heart he will not need the dictionary."

"And we must go to bed. You are tired, dear Mrs. Wilmarth," said Helen with solicitude.

"I miss my baths, I think. And I shall be glad to see the sunshine."

They saw it early the next morning coming up out of the ocean in all its magnificence. The bay was molten gold, the ocean beyond, liquid fire. Up above the shafts of rose and chrysophrase

and flaming scarlet shone the serene blue, the promise of a delightful day.

Helen waited until Mrs. Ballinger came down with her two patients, and just as she started she saw Mr. Danforth hastening toward her.

"They were afraid you had forgotten, so I offered to refresh your memory," he began in a gay tone, as if needing an apology.

"But you do not breakfast very early. Do you know that the Travis family have an ideal aspect in their every-day living, or perhaps I should say their summer living? Everything appears to come to hand and fit in so harmoniously. And it all seems clear enjoyment."

"They do enjoy a great deal. But I do not wonder society people like to run away to some quiet nook for a little summering. Jim is at the Technical Institute where I *was*," with some emphasis and a smile. "I have just graduated in surveying, civil engineering and a lot of useful things, and have an appointment to go west the first of September on an irrigation contract. Two of our students were asked for. Six took the examination."

"How proud your mother must feel. Well, your father also," with cordial appreciation.

He flushed a little.

"We have all wondered what became of you. Your voice startled me last night when we ran into each other. Were you frightened?"

"I was so near home. And you very seldom meet any one up this end of the village."

"When they began to talk of Helen Grant it came to me in a minute, and if you had said, 'Sirs, believe me, there's a way', I should have called you by your rightful name at once, making no mistake."

"Oh, that bit of an old poem!" Helen laughed. "And that school girl repeating it just to other girls. It is a very youthful picture," retrospectively.

"And a young fellow who took it for his motto and has been trying to live up to it, has achieved a certain success and found the way to some things he desired. And I've wanted to see you, but I was afraid I never should. I heard you had come back to Aldred House, and all that about your father—why, he was quite a famous man! We will have to talk it all over. And you are like, yet unlike, the little girl out on the lawn."

The troupe were coming down the lawn path, talking eagerly.

"You really meandered," began Miss Travis.

"I thought I should have to come after you both. Forward, march, now, and let us take a survey of the scene of our future achievements."

"Or failures," interposed Annie.

"I'm not going to fail. I do not believe Miss Grant will. The hero of the play has won laurels before, so I am in no doubt about him."

"That's Elsie's lover," explained Jim coming around to Helen's side. "He's a first-rate actor. I wonder how he has kept off the stage."

Annie Travis lingered with an unspoken invitation and Gordon Danforth took a quick step beside her, rather annoyed to be crowded out of his place by the young cub, as he termed Jim in his mind. Annie was a little curious about Helen.

"Oh," began Danforth, "it might be called a hearsay acquaintance. There is a fine boarding and day school in our town, and a number of the girls attend my father's church. So he and mother know them quite well. I saw her the first year she was there, then she was away for awhile. But when she came back last spring she and mother renewed their acquaintance."

"She's a very earnest, vigorous girl and means to go to college. And after that, teach, if some

young man doesn't come along and spoil it all," said Annie in a half tone of amusement.

"Will that spoil her life?"

"Why, no; if she likes the career better she will keep to that. A girl isn't compelled to be married now-a-days to have a position. But I think I like the home better. I could have gone to college, but I believe Elsie has as nice a time as if she had ten degrees to her name. And her lover is splendid!"

"Don't loiter so," exclaimed Miss Travis. "You young men can stroll along the beach and talk afterward. We mean business."

Mr. Seton was watching for them. Over the store was a kind of hall, often used for storage as well as any public meeting that might be called. Now and then the young people held a dance on a notable birthday. He ushered them up the stairs and then explained how he would arrange the stage, put up a curtain, and the rest of the space would be filled with seats.

"We must have some dressing rooms curtained off at the side," said Miss Travis. "And, oh, we ought to have an orchestra."

They all looked at each other in dismay.

"Why, yes," declared Jim. "Then the audience will not mind the waits so much."

"Well—there's the Balem band. I guess they will be glad enough to come," said Mr. Seton. "You see, I never fixed up a theatre before, so I'd rather you'd lay it out."

They planned it very nicely and drew it on a paper so that nothing would be forgotten.

"You are very good to take so much trouble," Miss Travis said.

Mr. Seton gave a chuckle. "Well, it's for ourselves, you see, or rather for Widow Kean. Pity if we couldn't take trouble for some one we've known from a little gal. And Joe Kean was a first-rate fellow. 'Twas an awful shame he should die so young. And the goodness seems mostly on your part. My! how everybody will enjoy it, beside the money. You see folks about here, the real old settlers I mean, don't often get to the big towns and see plays. You won't mind if we have a crowd?"

"Oh, no. It would be rather mortifying to play to empty seats," returned Miss Travis.

Mr. Seton laughed and gave a confident nod, wrinkling up his nose and half shutting his eyes. They had a little walk along the shore afterward. The air was crystal clear this morning and the sands seemed alight with gold.

"Now you young men must look up your own

amusement. I must have Miss Grant the rest of the morning, and Annie, there are several things mother wishes you to do, so you had better come with us," said Miss Travis.

Annie turned reluctantly. She was to have a minor part in the play but knew her lines.

There were two girl guests beside, who were much interested. It was a bright little society play with a misunderstanding between the lovers, and the friend's efforts to explain led to some rather laughable complications. Helen had the part of the friend.

"It is rather hard to ask you to do so much," said Miss Travis. "But you have such a quick memory."

"Oh, I am truly glad to help you in any way," Helen returned in her heartsome manner.

They read it over and Miss Travis made several explanations. Then luncheon was announced. The guests and the children were all at the table and Helen enjoyed it extremely. But she insisted afterward that she must return home and devote herself to business.

"We will come down in the evening to see how you get along and to hear your friend, Miss Craven, play. I've been telling Mr. Danforth about her."

Mrs. Gilbert brought some embroidery down to the cottage to spend the afternoon. The ladies sat on the porch enjoying the sea breezes and having a pleasant chat while Helen applied herself to her task. With her vivid insight she caught the spirit of the play and was full of interest.

She almost hoped the young men would find some other diversion for the evening, but they did not. Mr. Danforth was very much delighted in Miss Craven's music, but if he had not been he would hardly have found a chance with Helen, for young Travis seemed to think he had a right to monopolize her as they were to be in the play together.

There was much going back and forth and some pleasure trips so that they should not take the matter too seriously. Mr. Wilmarth joined his household and was at once interested in the young people. The prospect of the play seemed to stir up a great excitement. When Mr. Osborne came down they began with rehearsals, and for a wonder everything went smoothly. Helen liked him very much. There was another influx of guests, indeed the Travis house seemed quite like a hotel, and the spirit of welcome was delightful.

At length the eventful evening arrived. They

had inspected their improvised theatre and found everything in admirable order. Scenery and paraphernalia had been taken over. A small room had been cleared of various matters to be used as a kind of ante-room, and dressing-room for the girls.

James went out to reconnoitre as the band began tuning up, and came back large-eyed.

"Why, the place is packed already," he cried. "They haven't even left an aisle. Come, you must be on the mark."

Mr. Osborne looked at his watch and laughed. "We are not due until eight. Now above all things, don't a soul of you get a stage fright when you face this immense audience, though I have a feeling they will not be over critical."

The band played an overture. The curtain went up without a hitch. The place was packed, and all around the wall men were standing who could find no seats. The first act was a decided success and the applause was generous. The players were in fine spirits. Helen enjoyed her part immensely, and it seemed to her as if the play was very much shorter in the acting.

"There wasn't a break anywhere," said Mr. Osborne delightedly. "Miss Travis and I were old hands at it, but the rest of you deserve a

great deal of credit. And they ought to have made considerable money."

Mr. Seton came up before they had all their goods put in proper order.

"Well, we had them from everywhere," he said with a triumphant ring in his voice. "Tell you what, all them there carriages and wagons looked like a Fourth of July procession, and the store is full of men now talking it over. 'Twas first rate! And now you folks must come down in the dining room where Mrs. Seton has a little spread for you."

"I hope you have realized your expectations."

"We've had some promises and some donations and a crowded house, and there will be three hundred dollars to pay on the mortgage. We never can thank you young people enough, for, besides the money, it was just splendid! I don't know when I've had such a good time, and every one feels just about the same."

The Travis carriage took the younger members of the family and the Wilmarths. Juliet and Mrs. Gilbert went in another. The "company" pleased Mrs. Seton by accepting her little supper, for truth to tell their work had given them a good appetite.

"Your people are always so good, Miss Tra-

vis," Mrs. Seton declared. "It's a great pleasure to have you come down in the summer. Of course we know you are some of the city style and we are plain country folks, but we are not quite boors and occasionally do resent the airs some of the new-comers put on. We're not looking to company with them nor to be invited to their great doings, but we do appreciate being treated in a sort of friendly manner. And this has been such a great thing for Mrs. Kean! We haven't many well-to-do people among us, and money isn't so easy to get, but you see this has called in people from all about and they were pleased up to the full. So, as I said, we shall always be grateful to you."

Mr. Seton repeated all this and more, and they had a merry time over the table. Mr. Osborne drank their healths and wished the same success in all they might undertake.

Then they were sent home in the big stage. But it was midnight and the rest of their talk had to be saved until morning.

The next day was full of excitement as well. The young men went down to the store to convince themselves that it had not been half a fairy story. Mr. and Mrs. Seton were bubbling over with delight.

"I suppose the fun and enjoyment is worth paying for," she said. "Mr. Seton has been talking this mortgage business up ever so long and only had the promise of about thirty dollars. And here the money poured in last night and no one grudged a penny of it. And your play was just splendid! I don't know when we've had such a good time. It beats the picnic."

CHAPTER VII

JUST A GIRL

MR. WILMARTH was as enthusiastic as the rest. In his estimation Helen was the star. Juliet wondered that she had not felt afraid when she saw the crowded audience. Mrs. Wilmarth was very tired and her head began to ache in the olden way, and after luncheon she went to bed, while Helen sat and fanned her and kept her cool.

After supper she sat alone on the porch when Mr. Danforth came down.

"Can you go for a little walk?" he asked. "This is my last chance. I leave to-morrow. And though we have seen considerable of each other we have hardly had an opportunity for a real good talk. So I slipped off alone, and beg you to give me this last pleasure."

Helen rose without demur. She half guessed some of the others would be down. And she did not enjoy being appropriated so completely by James Travis.

They walked toward the shore in silence. The

solemn beauty of the night was something to be felt. Sheets of dappled clouds were sinking slowly in the west, while overhead the soft gray was being merged into blue, while here and there a star seemed suddenly to pierce through it. The tender silvery light of the moon rippled over the bay, touching the larger waves, then dropping into green and purple caves hollowed out for them. The darkling beach farther on dissolved in the dusk of distance, and the infinities of the sea, with the soft murmurous throb, seemed akin to that of the wide horizon.

"I've had such a nice time," Gordon Danforth said at length, and the soft air seemed to lend a peculiar depth to his voice. "Though I always do have with the Travis household. But one of the greatest delights has been meeting you."

"Have you known them long?" asked Helen, to evade the more personal reference.

"Nearly two years. Jim came over to the Institute, and like boys who have been indulged at home a good deal, got into a difficulty that might have been quite serious, but I succeeded in straightening out the matter and then nothing would do but I must come over to the city and meet his household. Mr. and Mrs. Travis are certainly fine, intelligent, and sensible people. They

live up town in New York. And as I was going away they all insisted that I should come down here and spend a week. They have such hosts of friends and relatives. That Mr. Osborne is splendid, if that is a girl's adjective," laughing a little. "They will be married about Christmas."

"I like Miss Travis very much indeed. Oh, they are all charming."

"And to think," Danforth resumed, "that I am to go away and leave all these nice people and enjoyments, and take up a rather wild life; it will be lonely at times as well. But it is really a fine thing to be offered to a young fellow, so I must not complain. I doubt if I would have found anything as good near by. A man has generally to work his way up."

Helen assented, indeed was much interested in listening to his plans. He was so ambitious and manly, so eager to make the very best of his education and talents, and pay back to his father in helping to educate the younger ones. They talked of Westchester and its people, and the beauty of the town, and touched upon her plans as well.

"Were you much startled that night I met you down here on the beach, ran into you indeed? What a terrible fog it was!"

Helen gave a short laugh. "It was so unusual to meet any one," she replied, "and I am not timid. The fog came up so suddenly. It was not really late."

"Oh, no. And when you spoke it gave me such a curious feeling. I knew I had heard the voice somewhere, and it had impressed me strongly that it was connected with something special in my life. At the dinner table they were bewailing the defection of one of their players and Annie said, 'Why not ask Helen Grant? I know she could do it.' Then the old picture flashed over me, and it was almost as if I heard your voice, 'Sirs, believe me, there's a way.' You can't think how many times that has stiffened me up when I have felt things were pretty tough. I've taken it for my mascot."

Helen experienced a thrill of pride. It was gratifying to influence a young man's life and aims.

"There's something about you that makes you a good comrade. You would spur any one up to his or her best. And I hate to have the friendship break off just here. I doubt if I come back until my engagement ends. And you will be in college, finding the 'way.' Oh," with a sort of

boyish eagerness, "I suppose we couldn't correspond."

"Oh, no," Helen returned simply. "The scholars are not allowed to write to any one outside of their relatives or a girl friend; except the engaged girls. There were two or three of them," and she gave a soft little amused sound, hardly a laugh.

"And we couldn't be engaged."

They had turned to walk homeward and now the moon had grown whiter and lighter, and as they glanced at each other in surprise Helen's face was scarlet, almost indignant, he thought.

"I beg your pardon," he said with the utmost sincerity. "I had no right to say that. We are neither of us old enough to understand what love really means to one's life, and I think we are both too sincere, too honorable to play at it. Forgive me."

"I am afraid I was—indiscreet. I did not think—" and Helen's voice showed her nervous agitation.

"You were right, and you shall not blame yourself. It was a piece of impertinence on my part, and I see now how impossible it would be to have even a friendly correspondence, when you will be so engrossed with your studies. I shall hear

about you through mother and that will be a great pleasure. You have such a clear, strong way of looking at things, and while you go straight to the truth you are never harsh or ungracious. Somehow you seem different from most girls."

"Is that a compliment?" she asked archly.

"Yes, it really is. Only I don't want you to come out of college a strong-minded woman, who despises the sweet, small graces of life, for, after all there is so much in real heartfelt living. Miss Travis is charming and noble, and she makes a wide circle truly happy. Of course she has a great deal in her hands, but some girls would have been engulfed in frivolous pleasures, if they were in so much society. And you have the same gift. I think it is trying to make people happy and comfortable in the manner they like best, and not insisting on your own way as being wiser and better. And I am interested in knowing what you will make of your life."

"It will be a practical every day life," she made answer. "After I am through college I shall teach. I have no fortune to fall back upon. And there are several journeys I count upon in vacation time. I think it will be a busy life. I like to have something in view all the time."

"But you must not crowd out friendship."

"Oh, I fancy I am always making friends," she returned with a sort of laugh in her voice. "Or—they come to me. Delightful people, too, and when they are so kind and lovely I keep thinking what I can give back that they need. Friendship is one of the greatest charms of life."

How frank and honest she was! Annie Travis would have drawn compliments and opinions applicable only to herself. She was not fond of talking generalities, no matter how fine and high they might be.

"I hope you will realize your aims and wishes. And I can't tell you how glad I am to have had this pleasant time with you, though it has been broken into with all sorts of irrelevant matters. And I feel quite sure we shall meet again and compare notes as to how much we have gained, and what we are making of our lives. You know I have been trained to believe life is a serious thing and was given for some purpose. And a young man who is poor and has to make his way in the world cannot afford to fritter it away in trifling amusements, except now and then when play time comes."

"And a girl who has to do the same thing must have courage enough to keep steadily at

her aim even if the way is not always over roses," and the ring in her voice had a definite richness.

"You suggest an odd thing to me. Ever since I can remember, my mother has had a climbing plant called sweet-briar. It looks like a rose vine, but it never bears roses. It has briars, but if you pull off a spray and crush it in your hand it is very fragrant. Before I knew its true virtue I said one time to mother—"Why do we not cut that down, it never blossoms?" 'It does better than that,' returned mother, 'it has a constant sweetness.'"

"That is worth remembering. If you can't bloom you may shed little whiffs of fragrance around," and her eyes kindled with a glow of eagerness.

"You are quick with your application," and she knew he was smiling by the sound in his voice.

They had come to their lane. The wind wafted the resonance of voices down to them.

"They are on our porch," exclaimed Helen. "Let us go up," and she turned.

"The sands and the sea and the moon are too magnificent to leave. I shall remember this walk a long, long time. And I am going to say my real good-bye here, for to-morrow it will be a general one. If you desire to hear of my suc-

cess I think mother will only be too happy to exploit it. And I mean to succeed and keep myself clean and upright for the sake of all those who are interested in me. I shall think of you and wish you all success, glad to have known a girl of such earnest endeavor."

"Thank you," she returned much moved. If a girl might have had such a brother!

"There you come, truants!" and Annie Travis ran down the path with her greeting in a rather sharp tone. "If we had been sure whether you went up or down we should have followed. But we found Mr. Wilmarth so entertaining that we stayed."

"I have been taking a last view of the waters, if not the woods," said Mr. Danforth.

"O dear! how sentimental! I don't see *why* you have to go," rejoined the girl.

"I came for a week and have stayed almost a fortnight."

"That was for the play."

"Oh, you must rate yourself higher than that."

Helen went around beside Mr. Wilmarth and asked after Mrs. Wilmarth.

"Mrs. Ballinger came down and put her to sleep. I think she will be all right to-morrow. This is the first severe headache she has had I be-

lieve. She has improved very much. And you have had a good time I hope?"

"It has been splendid. The ocean is magnificent."

"Have you seen a storm?"

"We heard one and it was awful. And there was one such queer fog."

Jim appealed to her about the play. If he could not be near her she should talk to him.

She answered briefly. She did not want to talk, but just sit in the fragrant silence. Annie and Mr. Danforth kept up a light kind of skirmishing. Then the clock struck.

"Is that ten? Then we must go home at once. We were all up late last night," the girl said, and the three strolled away.

"That is good advice," rejoined Mr. Wilmarth as he rose. "It occurs to me that you are quite dissipated for a quiet out-of-the-way country place."

"And some nights we have gone to bed at nine," laughed Helen.

"I think Annie Travis was rather vexed that you had gone off with Mr. Danforth," said Juliet as they were preparing for bed. "I do believe she cares a great deal for him."

"But he is going away for three years."

"They can correspond."

"She wouldn't marry a poor young man. And I surely would not blame her. They have a delightful home in New York, and Annie has some very grand ideas. Then Miss Elsie is going to marry so well."

"I like Miss Travis a great deal better than I do Annie," Miss Craven said. "And Mrs. Travis is very charming. And the little girls are sweet. Oh, I wonder how my poor little girls get along? I wish I had told them to write. I am afraid they are not happy."

Helen was wondering vaguely about her walk and the talk. Was there anything in it that she ought to acknowledge to any one—Mrs. Wilmarth for instance? It was not a confession of love, surely!

Annie Travis was fond of repeating what young men had said to her, and more than once Helen had thought it lacking in delicacy. No, there really was nothing her best friend ought to know. It had been said simply for the sake of the pleasant letters. So settling it that way she went to sleep.

The four young people of the Travis family escorted Mr. Danforth down to the station the next morning, and they paused for him to say

good-bye. Mrs. Wilmarth was much better and sitting out on the porch. It was as he had said to Helen, a formal if cordial good-bye, full of good wishes, the way casual friends part.

"There's nothing between them," Annie Travis said to her sister as they walked back. Mr. Osborne and Jim had gone off for a row. "I did more than half suspect. And their being old friends."

"Do you mean Helen? She isn't thinking of lovers or even admirers. Her heart is set upon college."

"Well—since she will have to get her living. What a pity those girls couldn't change places. Helen would make a fine rich woman, and Miss Craven hasn't any ambition to shine. No one would ever imagine her a rich girl. And I suppose some man will come along and marry her for her money. She has no other special charm."

"Oh, you forget her music. She ought to study regularly and compose."

"Women don't do much in that line. Fancy a woman leading at a concert!" and Annie gave an ironical laugh.

"She has a fine friend in Helen Grant. There will be a place for her to fill in the world, never fear."

"I'd fill a big place if I had her money and could do just as I liked," returned the younger with a sound of grudging in her voice.

"And she would give it nearly all up to have some relatives of her very own. To be the elder sister of a large family that she would have to provide for mostly, would be her delight. She would like to do everything for Helen, but Helen is so self-reliant."

"I think she is foolish not to make the most of such a friend."

A soft, half remote smile played about the elder's lips. She had noted how clearly Helen defined herself.

"I think she is trying to make the most of her, but not in your sense. Miss Craven seems timid and inexperienced, as if she had been hidden in some out-of-the-way corner, while Miss Grant has that strong sense of the fitness of things, and can apply it to almost every case. I am wonderfully interested in both of them."

Miss Travis sighed. Occasionally persons are met whom we would like to keep in touch with for years, and they are almost sure to pass out of our ken. And the people who interest us less, sometimes keep step with us in an irritating manner.

The party on the porch watched the others out of sight. Helen sat down on the step after her adieu to them. Mr. Wilmarth took the other side and leaned against the post that upheld the roof.

"That Danforth is a fine fellow," and he blew a long whiff of smoke from his cigar. "And Jim is a cub!"

Helen laughed. "It's the difference between riches and ease, and"—a line came in her forehead—"well—ambition. But you see, Mr. Danforth has the advantage of some years of experience and an intellectual father. Mr. Travis is engrossed with property interests and means to give his children good educations for their positions in life. I like Miss Travis very much. She has a wide outlook. And the next boy, Arthur, is going to try for West Point. Miss Annie I suppose is a society girl—"

"Upon my word, Helen, you seem to have reached a discriminating point. Now tell us what James will develop."

Helen flushed deeply. "He has been two years at Stevens Institute and doesn't know himself. I do not think I have made a study of him, even if people do interest me. This is vacation time, you know. And I shall have to confess that it

isn't my experience, really. You hear the girls talk at school, and catch a sort of second-hand wisdom."

"James, I think, will be the ordinary rich man's son, and pretty fair if he doesn't fall in bad company, and marry young. There are a great many nice girls left in the world, though you couldn't persuade a man to that truth when he has made *his* selection. But the other young fellow carries his purposes in his face. Are there many like him at Westchester? If so, it must have some of the leaven that is going to uplift the world."

"I don't know. You see we are not supposed to be specially interested in young men. Instead we analyze those of maturer years who have written learned books for the improvement of our minds. How little did they think school girls would criticise!"

"How do you come to know so much about Mr. Danforth?"

Mrs. Wilmarth leaned over a little so she could see Helen's face. It was tranquil, then a sense of amusement passed over it.

"Why, it's very funny." Then she laughed outright, but with no self-consciousness, although

there were two incidents that would belong especially to her.

"It is really funny," she began again. "I never saw him but once and I was a little girl in short skirts. He came to the lawn fête with his mother. The school winds up with that, and dissipations begin, mild ones in the way of picnics and going up or down the river and making your coffee on the coals when the brush has burned out. I never remained in vacation. Then he came here as the Travis' guest. They have known him two years. His mother talks about him and is very proud of him, for he has earned part of his expenses tutoring boys. There's a family of children, five I believe."

"Six," said Miss Craven. "And four are boys."

"Well, the clergyman will have done an excellent work if he gives the world four young men as fine and capable as the first one," said Mr. Wilmarth.

Mrs. Wilmarth had wondered a little, but her heart was at rest now. She would have been a poor chaperon, she thought, if one had been needed. She had not taken into consideration the ubiquitousness of boys. She was beginning

to think there were many things she had not considered.

One of the children ran down to know if Miss Craven would come up and go over some music with Sister Elsie. "She didn't say anything about you," looking at Helen, "but I guess you can come all the same."

"No," and Helen's smile set the matter in a pleasant light. "I have ever so many things to do."

Mr. Wilmarth walked down the path and presently took the road to the beach. Helen's face insensibly dropped into grave lines, her companion noticed.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked.

"That presently we shall go away. We seem always going away from something, at least I am. And two or three times I've wondered where the stop would be in my life. It's always pushing on to the next thing. There will be a year at school and then four years at college. Well, that will be quite a long, steady time."

"And you are resolved upon that?"

"Yes, indeed. Oh, dear, I'd like to be in parts, ever so many Helens," but there was a rather rueful expression about the lips and eyes: "And you have only one body, unless it is true there



Helen flung herself on the footstool, clasping both of Mrs. Wilmarth's hands. — *Page 131.*

is an astral body. But that would come and go and the two really couldn't work at the same time, or at different things."

"Why, people do leave a potent influence behind them often"—studying the girl. "And how many people would you like to be?" laughing a little.

"Why, it seems sometimes as if I ought to be Mrs. Dayton's daughter. I did once wish that she was my mother. But I could not be content with the life. I love so many beautiful things and people of cultivation, knowledge."

"No, that wouldn't have done."

"She is so sweet about it, too. And she loves me truly. But she does understand, while Aunt Jane is never willing to see but one aspect of life. And sometimes I wonder how I came to outgrow those early influences."

"They were those of other people, not yours. And one of the girls might be mine."

Helen sprang up with eager steps and flung herself on the footstool, clasping both of Mrs. Wilmarth's hands, and her eyes were luminous with love and tears.

"I've thought of that, too. I like the beautiful home, every room makes a picture. And you would make such a sweet mother."

"And you would spoil me utterly. I have thought of a good many things in the weeks I have been here watching you and Miss Craven."

"Oh, I hope—" then Helen paused. A certain inward sense made her aware that her dream was not coming true.

"Miss Craven and I are somewhat—I might say a good deal—on parallel lines, and you know they never touch or clash, and both are necessary at times. I like her very much and her musical gift is enchanting. She is curiously harmonious, and there is a kind of tenderness, no, I had better call it deprecation lest she shall jar or offend. She has none of that courage you possess, of going at once to any one's heart."

"That is her fault. She is timid about herself. But she has outgrown it somewhat."

"And that is my fault now. It did not used to be when I went into society and entertained. Mr. Wilmarth has been so devoted these bad years, and then you came and showered your brightness upon me, and this girl would wait on me hand and foot, as the saying is, read to me, sing to me, be silent if she saw a tired look cross my face. Why doesn't this give me strength and inspiration?"

Helen looked troubled.

"Some day she will meet with one who will demand things from her, and she will rise to the occasion, I know. She has a sweet, earnest nature. Now, haven't you roused some feelings and motives in her?"

"Yes, I have." Helen smiled then.

"I'm afraid I couldn't. Oh, the grand secret of it all is—and I've learned that from you, giving from your inward self, not the pleasant easy outside things. If I were poor I think she would delight to minister to me in every way, especially with her money, and if she were poor we would come nearer to each other's heart. That was what I meant when I said we were on parallel lines. We shall be in a certain sense dear and delightful friends, and I am glad to know her. Dr. Johnson advises us to keep our friendship in repair and I begin to realize that I haven't kept mine. Perhaps Hope isn't a very congenial soil."

"I don't believe it is," with a remoteness of tone.

"Yet you seem to have found plenty of friends."

"Of course that was different. I could go out—"

"And I must go out—out of myself. I've been nursed up too long. I am better, stronger; I

feel that every day. And I want companionship. I can have you or Miss Craven only now and then. And you can't guess where my choice has fallen!"

Helen considered. "You know that Miss Anderson? She confessed to me a few days ago she meant to try for a place as companion, and wondered if I couldn't inquire of the Travises. And the play has put it all out of my head," rather ruefully.

Mrs. Wilmarth smiled. "No, a companion was not exactly what I was looking for. The thought came to me a few days ago. Mrs. Ballinger was discussing Mrs. Gilbert and telling a little of her history. She has been very unfortunate and had a hard, joyless kind of life, though it seemed to begin fair enough. Her father left a little money, and a cousin, whose husband was her guardian, sent her to boarding school. The money being mostly spent she was over-persuaded to marry an attractive young man with no stability of character whose mother was glad to foist him on some one while she went her way. They boarded until they were so much in debt they were requested to leave. He never kept a position any length of time. When matters were very bad the mother came to their assist-

ance and blamed the poor wife for the success. She taught music and did fine sewing, but both were poorly paid. She was little past eighteen when she married, and at twenty-two took a position in a store, since her husband was away a good deal and she had no house to keep. She could earn her own support and she liked it better than sewing. Then he met with an accident and broke his hip and was in a hospital for months and left very lame and in poor health. The mother established them in a cheap boarding house and made it her duty to nurse and care for him. He had been quite dissipated and was nervous and irritable. There was almost two years of this, and at twenty-five she was left a widow with broken health. She went to the seaside with a person who made a regular lady's maid of her, and was generally unpleasant. Then she obtained a position in one of the charitable institutions for children until her health gave out. Mrs. Ballinger had known something of her life and asked her down here, and she has recuperated wonderfully."

"And she is so refined and lady-like!" Helen exclaimed with a surprise in her voice that was almost protest.

"And think what the life must have been to

her, the shifting about, the mortifications, the continual struggle to keep out of the mire of debt, and the man who took no heed of these things! She could go back to the institution, but that is very distasteful. And so I said to myself, why should I not do something in this world where so much is needed? I have much that I could give her out of my very own heart and life, and she needs it."

"Oh, how good and sweet you are!" Helen clasped the hands tenderly and then reaching up kissed her with the tenderness of true appreciation.

"Since neither of you girls really need me, and we can be friends just the same; since neither of you can come into my life and have yours so full of aims and plans, I can go out and bring in this solitary soul. I said I had learned something from you—to give what we have and not dream over impossible things and sigh because we cannot do them. I am to take her home with me, she is to be my guest and companion through the winter, and if I am ill she will nurse me. And I shall try to give her a little happiness. I do not mean that it shall be all on one side."

"It is splendid!" Helen's eyes shone. "I am

glad for your sake. You were lonely and you do need some one."

"And you are not jealous?" with depth and sweetness in her tone.

"Oh, I am happy instead. And you have given us a lovely summer."

"And you made it possible for me." They looked earnestly into each other's eyes with a sudden vision of unquestioned affection.

CHAPTER VIII

GATHERING UP THE FRAGMENTS

THE musicale was as much of a success in one way as the play had been. Balem people were not very highly cultivated in that direction, but Miss Travis was wise in her selections. Miss Craven was glad to be of service, and the little church reaped quite a benefit. They remained until the last moment, Helen declared, and then were truly sorry to go, though Helen felt it would be a relief to be freed from the attentions of James, who, in spite of many evasions, had become her shadow, much to the amusement of his sisters.

Mr. Wilmarth had most cordially endorsed his wife's plan, and Mrs. Gilbert was to go up with them. Both girls would remain for a fortnight at Hope and then return to school. The experience had been beneficial to Juliet Craven, who did admire Mrs. Wilmarth very much, and had gained not a little through her intercourse with the Travis family, as well as having been brought into wider contact with a variety of people. Mrs.

Gilbert was both grateful and delighted with her new prospect. Certainly the summer had been a success.

They had very little of Helen to be sure. Mr. and Mrs. Walters claimed her, for there was the book gotten up in historic style, and it had met with a most favorable reception. Of course she must look it over. "This makes me think of your father," Mr. Walters would say of one place, and "Here I was really puzzled until I had your father's notes. Then you kept me from being too dry. One clergyman wrote to me—'This is really the romance of history.'"

One of the touching things to her was that it was dedicated to her father's memory.

Another delight was her letter from Mrs. Bell, who begged for a little visit, if only for two days. Daisy had been away nearly all summer and had gone to Chicago to visit a schoolmate.

"She has scarcely been home all the summer, but Marjorie and I have had a loving, confidential time. Marjorie will be married in the spring, but her lover has accepted a charge only a few miles distant, so I shall see her frequently. Willard and Mr. Bell are most anxious to have you come."

It was not possible, Helen admitted with a sigh.

Had Willard changed much, she wondered. What made her think of Gordon Danforth in the same breath!

Juliet went over to the farm with her one day to see how Nat was progressing. He had grown into a tall, manly fellow. Aunt Jane had a new grievance. Sam was married and keeping house in a few rooms and how they were going to get along on nothing she couldn't see. But if a girl was foolish enough to do that it was her lookout.

Jenny was prospering and the children were fine. Uncle Jason just adored them.

"I'd like to stay a whole month," Helen exclaimed. "There's so much to talk over."

"An' seems to me we ought to be as much thought of as those Wilmarth people!" Aunt Jane said complainingly. "You might have divided the time!"

"Oh, I wish there were six hundred days in a year and I might get round to everything."

"Put them in spring and fall then," said Nat.

"No, I'll put them in summer for the sake of the long vacation," she returned archly.

But there was Mrs. Dayton to visit, and some of the girls. And Helen was wonderfully interested in the way Mrs. Gilbert was settling with her friend. She admired the house so much and

she really saw charms in Hope. She was tired of the noise and confusion of cities.

"And I shall try for a little wider personality," Mrs. Wilmarth said. "It is a temptation to give way to invalidism and feel rather lonely and deserted. I shall recall how you flashed into my life, Helen, and the sunshine you brought. I want to put some in this worn and tired heart which has had nothing but sorrows thus far. That will be my thank-offering for the new degree of health."

It was very hard to go away, much harder than Helen imagined. Hope seemed really dear to her. She wondered if she had chosen the right way? Yet had not God removed the obstacles and shown her the pleasant path to walk in?

There was quite a deputation to see the two girls off. Mr. Wilmarth had looked after the trunks and had the checks. Then the down train came steaming in with its shrill whistle and stopped amid a cloud of haze and smoke. Several passengers stepped off. One man turned to look at the group, especially noticing the bright, radiant girl who stood up so straight with a vigor most attractive. Then he paused.

"Oh, Mr. Warfield," Helen cried eagerly. "I did not suppose I should see you, and left a

greeting with Mrs. Dayton. So you see I have not forgotten you."

"It is pleasant to be remembered." She had changed even in these few months, grown prettier, he thought, with the charm of coming womanhood.

That train ran on its way and the other came in. The girls stepped on board with a shower of good-byes, but looked back—yes, longingly.

They had time to settle, and to talk things over as girls love to do in a fashion of lengthening pleasures before they quite take their flight.

"I have never had such a happy time in my life," said Juliet. "I have never met so many charming people. It seems like an entrancing dream."

Helen looked at her friend. "If she could be enthusiastic she would grow quite pretty," she thought. "And how lovely Mrs. Wilmarth is!" Juliet continued. "That was real kindness to offer Mrs. Gilbert such a home and put it as a great favor to herself. Helen, I wish *we* had a real home. I sometimes think it would be better than all the learning in the world. But I should want you. And you will not be satisfied unless you go to college, so I shall go, too. I wonder if you will ever get tired of me?"

"You *could* have the home," Helen returned thoughtfully. "I must earn it."

"What a proud thing you are!"

"I want to tell you that I've earned a hundred dollars, really earned it, assisting Mr. Walters. He would make me take it—the first profit of the book. And it gives me an odd feeling. But I am a lucky girl to have enough left me for my immediate wants, and that blessed course."

"I should have been only too glad if you had accepted it from me. What I am ever to do with all my money—"

"Oh, there are things and things you will find presently. And if I needed I would take it from you on the very first proffer."

"Thank you," and Juliet pressed her hand.

Oh, the delightful things one could do with money! For a brief instant Helen was almost envious. Yet everything had gone well with her and she was loved—well perhaps more than her deserts. She thought of the little girl in outgrown faded calico frocks, telling her sorrows and joys to the old apple tree. And the little maid waiting on Mrs. Van Dorn, and the great sorrow. Then the girl, trying to love and be dutiful to the father she had not seen since childhood, and who commanded her obedience and

asked no love. What a curious sort of patchwork life seemed, *her* life at least. Would there be a nice tranquil year now, a delightful year of study? She was really longing to get back to it.

And it came in sight presently, the pretty little station with a bed of asters in bloom and several of the girls who had walked down to see if any new girl had arrived.

"Oh, Helen Grant!" and Marcia Hyde caught both hands, though one held a satchel. "I was afraid some unlooked-for episode had crossed your path like a tornado and swept you away. Such queer things happen to you! I've been here since noon. Howd'do Miss Craven! And we are all changed over on the other side, the graduating corridor. And I have the room next to yours. And yours opens into Miss Craven's. I suppose you are still Damon and Pythias, or wasn't there some wonderful woman friendship? There ought to be. Women are as good as men."

"Are there any new scholars?"

"Four who have come for a post-graduate course from a school whose diploma doesn't admit to college. And you two will have a rival! It's very funny," and Miss Hyde laughed heartily.

"Rival in what?"

"Well—friendship. You're not so dissimilar. Why, Helen, it seems queer, but you *were* a little girl when you first came here, and I thought Miss Craven so tall. You have almost caught up to her."

"Little girls are born with the faculty of growing," Helen remarked dryly.

"And these other girls—they come from the same town. Miss Kent is tall and thin, stiff as a pound of starch and severe enough for a Puritan grandmother. Miss Logan isn't very tall, plump and round and rosy and looks as if she might be full of fun. They really wanted your room."

"It was very good of Mrs. Aldred," said Miss Craven in a heartfelt tone.

"The others haven't been introduced yet. They came in the other train. My! What a class we shall have! They will not all go to college. Are you sure to?"

"That is my resolve," returned Helen decisively.

"Now, I feel queer about it. Father doesn't believe in it for a woman. Mother believes it gives you a position. I think college girls have lots of fun, and the commencements are splen-

did! I might go for two years, but four takes so much out of your life."

They had reached the familiar place. Mrs. Aldred stood on the wide porch. Helen made a quick step and clasped her hand.

"You can't think how glad I am to come back," she said with breathless delight.

"The highest compliment you can pay me," was the rejoinder. "I hope both of you girls have had a happy vacation?"

She looked so earnest, so interested, and the charm about her appealed to both girls, though in a different manner. It is not so much what others give us as our receptivity, and how we can make the best of what is proffered.

"It was delightful to me," returned Helen. "I have been living alongside of the grand old ocean, and sometimes dreaming over the wonderful changes it had seen. How did the first frail boats have the courage to cross it?"

"I have often wondered at the bravery of those pioneer women. Yet now we go round the world with less fear. I hope you have brought plenty of vigor and energy for the year's work. I want it to be a fine year for you graduates, though I will say I shall be sorry to part from you. I realized last year how girls grow into my heart.

You will find some changes, but I have kept you two friends together. And you will meet several new ones."

"Thank you for the consideration," and Helen smiled cordially.

Their belongings had been taken to the new apartment. The doorway was wide and hung with a portiere, but the window looked toward the rising sun, the depression of the river and the crest of the hills opposite.

"I almost feel as if I was in a strange place," Helen said. "There was a wider outlook on the other side. But this is the chamber of peace for pilgrims."

Juliet dropped into a rocking chair. "The longing for a home grows upon me," she said in a tone that touched Helen, and she wondered a little if five years of study would compensate for it.

But the trunks were brought in and they began to unpack and settle. Then the dinner bell rang and they went slowly down stairs. The other friends walked just before them. Miss Kent was undeniably stiff. Her figure had not filled out, her shoulders were thin. Then her gown was extremely plain and her linen collar seemed to define the thin neck with the hair combed up

high, which appeared quite unnecessary. Miss Logan had some curly ends about hers and a soft bit of lace falling over a light blue tie.

Miss Grace Aldred was introducing the newcomers. A card was by each plate. Helen walked half way round, then flushed as she espied her name for hostess, though she would fain have had it otherwise. But she took her seat with a smile. There were five entirely new girls, and some of the others she had scarcely known. It would have proved rather awkward, but for Miss Hyde, who seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of small talk and amusing comments. She reminded Helen of a Miss Mays, who had been in school during the first year, and she wondered if there would be an undercurrent of captious criticism.

It was so pleasant that the girls roamed about the grounds afterward by twos and threes.

"Did I seem like that Miss Kent when I first came?" Miss Craven asked eagerly.

"Why no. Oh, no," and Helen laughed with a sort of joyous consolation.

"I was tall and thin and frightened out of my wits among so many bright girls."

"But you see, Miss Kent isn't frightened at all. She has considerable of that French quality

aplomb, which, I take it, is often a settled opinion of oneself, and you hadn't the least mite of an opinion. Then your clothes were stylish, all the girls noted that, and you were indifferent to them. You might have worn just such things all your life. But I don't see why—" Helen paused and a knot of perplexity settled in her fair brow.

"Can I answer the why?"

"No, I don't believe you can," and sunshine illumined the face again. "It is why girls and women do not try to make themselves as pretty as possible. Why they can't have bright as well as dull faces, for it seems to me dull faces come from apathy, and there are so many splendid things in this world to think about. But that wasn't just what I meant. I think those wide plain linen collars are trying unless you have a nice white neck, and *why* does everybody, almost," with a mirthful gleam in the eyes, "want to wear one thing whether it suits or not! That bit of lace and the blue tie made Miss Logan interesting. She hasn't a fine complexion, her eyes are small, her nose is, well, rather 'tip-tilted,' and her mouth wide. But I took a real fancy to her, and there's a half smile hovering about her face that indicates that she could en-

joy a bit of fun. Miss Kent has really very nice features, but her face is too long an oval, and she ought to have some fluffiness, just a little, at her forehead to soften it. And something different about her neck. I'm not sure, but I ought to run a beautifying parlor, there are such in the cities, to show people how to make the best of themselves. But I'm afraid I would not be fashionable. There, it's rather mean to criticise your schoolmates, but I always want to add to, not take from, and I let character and qualities alone until I know about them."

"I owe you a good deal," Juliet said with deep feeling.

"And you have been a great source of interest to me. Really you are the nearest to a sister of any girl I have known."

Juliet bent over and kissed her. "If I could make you that!" she cried passionately.

The grounds looked so pretty with so many white figures flitting about. As they turned they met a group of the younger girls who had a dozen questions for Helen.

"You see, we don't feel afraid of you if you are in the graduating class and mean to go to college," laughed one.

"Oh, I should hope not."

Then the bell rang for nine and they wandered in rather reluctantly.

"What a glorious night!" ejaculated Miss Hyde. "One ought to stay out until the 'wee sma' hours.'"

"And get up tired and sleepy and cross the next morning."

Helen was up early watching the sun rise from a new point, and thinking she would not care to spend all her days down at Balem any more than at Hope. Yes, it was the variety that made life charming. And how was everybody progressing? It seemed as if she must have left the old friends behind a month ago.

Two letters came in the morning's mail for Miss Craven. That from her friend, Mrs. Howard, was sad. They had tried almost everything for Mr. Howard, but now there seemed little hope. The autumn would be fine up there among the mountains, and Mr. Howard was buoyed up with the delusive consumptive's hope that he was improving, so they should remain until cold weather. The son in California wanted them to come out there; perhaps they might presently. Wouldn't Miss Craven write her a dear, long letter and tell her what she was doing and what plans she had for the future. And what friends

she had made. Was that Helen Grant as charming as ever?

The other was bulky, some statements from the trustee, Mr. Davis, a generous check and a letter from his wife.

This exploited some new plans. She had been abroad two years and it was a source of regret that Miss Craven had not been her companion. She would have improved faster and become conversant with the ways of the world and society, which was the great thing after all. A young woman of means really owed something to the world. Strong-minded women who took up fads and suffrage and homes for people too lazy and too careless to do for themselves, were out of date and a subject of amusement to their more sensible sisters. The only true career of a woman in which she could carry weight and have an influence on society was marriage. She was just of a good age to be a success now, and her fortune would enable her to make her choice. Two or three years hence she would find herself somewhat shelved.

The Davises were to have a house in Washington this winter, as Mr. Davis had some matters he was anxious to engineer through Congress. She would have the entrée of the best so-

ciety and everything would be done for her. She had better decide to come at once to New York and get fitted out for a campaign and have a taste of the gayeties there; and in November they would settle in Washington. Juliet was advised not to be silly nor obstinate, since both Mr. and Mrs. Davis would take the warmest interest in their ward.

"Oh dear," said Juliet, "I wish she had kept her displeasure. I simply do not want to live with her, to be patronized and married out of hand. As if there were no career but marriage! And as if a fortune would not allow a woman to do as she liked, and not have a man set over her!" and the eyes were raised in strong protest.

"Juliet, are you really preparing for a life of celibacy? I was reading in some French book that even a rich woman cannot afford to allow her youthful chances to escape without the risk of a long repentance! Oh, beware!"

"It's curious, and when you hear girls talk about lovers and marriage so confidently," Juliet interpolated reflectively, "that I should—well that it should seem distasteful to me. Are old maids born and not so much shaped by circumstances?"

"You grow younger-looking. And until you get really old—why we shouldn't call Mrs. Al-

dred an old woman. So there will be a good many years even if you shouldn't marry."

"I think Mrs. Davis spoiled the subject for me in the beginning. I really had no charms. I was ignorant and awkward, but she tried to comfort me with the thought that my money would make amends. Getting married was really necessary, because I had so much of it. And men nowadays thought quite as much about money as women and girls. And when I insisted on education she said men did not care for that; six months' finishing in a convent or a fashionable school would be enough. With my fortune I should be sure to marry well, she would look out for that. And I hate to think of it, I positively do."

She was so indignant that her eyes flashed and looked really fine, Helen told her laughingly. She had changed and improved.

"Think how brief Mrs. Aldred's married life was, seven years and then left to get her living and that of her two little girls. She is charming and I have learned to love and admire her. And there's Mrs. Beach, the dressmaker, bringing up her three boys, keeping a pleasant home and earning a good deal of money. And Mrs. Ballinger has been a widow fifteen years and made

and saved enough in that time to buy a little home. And then there's that poor Mrs. Gilbert. How much better it would have been for her if she had not married!"

"They are good examples of what a woman can do alone. But I think four years of college life are splendid, because you do not have to settle this question but can just study."

Juliet looked grave but made no reply.

They were engrossed in settling their rooms, greeting some of last year's girls and making advances to some of the new ones, talking to Miss Aldred, and in the afternoon Helen proposed a walk to the parsonage.

"Why, we shall see them to-morrow," Juliet returned in a surprised tone. Then she added, "But you go if you like."

Helen colored. Did she really want to see Mrs. Danforth so much? Of course she must have heard from Gordon. How did he like it away from everybody?

They sat out on the wide porch, both with books. Helen's was a French exercise. She had meant to do ever so much studying during vacation. But what with sailing and rowing, wandering about, association with the Travis family, the amusing people, mostly fishermen's fam-

ilies, the play, and reading aloud to Mrs. Wilmarth, she had not made any advance. Oh, there would be so much to do this year. But work did not truly begin until Monday. And the Autumn was beginning to have touches of gorgeousness. Here and there a scarlet branch seemed to be flung out among the deep green of the maples. Down the walk was a row of old-fashioned dahlias in almost every color, and against a lattice groups of tall cosmos, in their waving silken bloom, the pink ones looking not unlike wild roses.

Juliet was not reading. She had been listening to the in-coming train that Helen had not heard at all, and the expectancy was still in her face. Yes, that was the stage bringing down new or old scholars. It paused before the door. A gentleman alighted, handed out a girl—oh, that was Bessy Ray and Helen nodded—then two smaller ones, and Juliet made a quick movement, flew down the steps and both children ran to her with outstretched arms and a glad cry. Yes, that was Mr. Gartney who shook hands and smiled cordially.

"They have been crying for you the last three days, well for that matter all summer, I think.

Thank heaven you are here. Oh, children, don't strangle Miss Craven."

She could hardly get up the steps, so eager were they. Mr. Gartney bowed to Helen, who thought he looked very pale and tired.

"I must see Mrs. Aldred," he said, "then I will come out for a good-bye," and he entered the hall.

Juliet dropped into the chair and one child almost fell into her lap. The other put an arm around her neck and leaned close up against her in a transport of delight.

"We're so glad," they cried in the same breath. "It's been such a long, lonesome summer without you. If we'd had wings we should have flown to you."

CHAPTER IX

AN ATMOSPHERE OF COMRADESHIP

THE Gartney children seemed crying for very joy. Helen looked on in surprise.

One had outgrown the other a trifle. She possessed a more vigorous organization, and her coloring was more decided. That was Wilma. Elma's hair was a paler gold, her eyes a lighter blue; her lips not such a brilliant red.

Wilma looked around presently and caught Helen's eye, flushed, and then gave a half smile, as if not quite sure of its reception.

"Did you have a nice time all summer?" she asked in a friendly way.

"No, I didn't," returned the child. "It was a great, big farm full of cows and sheep and chickens, and a great old turkey gobbler who always ran at you and made a horrible noise. And we are afraid of cows. The nights were so long and lonesome and when it rained it was like an army marching over the roof. And we were always afraid of Aunt Mary. Oh, I would a million times rather stay here at school! We were so

glad to come back that we danced for very joy. But papa said we need never go again."

Elma gave a little shiver in Miss Craven's arms, and was pressed closer.

"Then you do not like the country?"

"Not that country. Nor Aunt Mary, nor Uncle Jacob. And Aunt Mary made us wipe dishes and said we ought to learn to wash and sweep and keep house and be useful. And there was nothing to read. Oh, it was just dreadful! We were frightened when we first came here to school, and homesick, but Miss Craven was so sweet. Oh, we do love you so," and she kissed Juliet with a passionate fervor that touched Helen, and gave her a curious gladness that Juliet had been able to awaken such an enthusiastic affection.

"Were there no children?"

"There was a poor house girl, bigger and older than we are, but she worked all the time. And Aunt Mary wanted to cut our hair short, like hers, but Uncle Jacob was very angry and said he would write and tell papa to come and take us away. But she did it up in a great wad and said she wouldn't have so much frownsiness flying about."

Helen laughed. Perhaps she was like Aunt Jane.

"And were there no other people?"

"There were the men who worked on the farm."

"It must have been lonesome."

"It was dreadful. We used to say our lessons over to each other, and sometimes we sewed carpet rags. I didn't mind that. But they wouldn't let the cats come in the house. We went down to the barn, but they were so shy. There were some kittens once but they were drowned and the poor mother went crying everywhere."

Mrs. Aldred and Mr. Gartney came out presently and she gave the little girls a warm welcome. Their father had made all arrangements and had to take a train to the city. The children clung to him now.

"Walk down a little way with me," he said. He was afraid there would be a pathetic scene. "And will not Miss Craven go to bring you safely back?"

"Oh, yes," cried both girls. "But if you didn't have to go—oh, why do you?"

He gave a faint smile. Juliet rose and they all walked slowly down the street, the children first with one, then with the other. When they

were out of hearing, Mrs. Aldred turned to Helen and said:

"It is a very sad stroke of fate that the step-mother is not fond of these children. She is quite a literary person and has had a volume of poems published; paints very well and is interested in clubs and all that. I can understand how an intellectually minded man could be attracted by such a woman. She is not fond of children though; I gathered that from his saying last winter she thought the influence of a good school was much better than to have them thrown into the society of grown people all the time. He spoke of her in the highest and most delicate terms, but I could read the reticence. I am glad Miss Craven should take such an interest in them. They were very shy at first, Miss Wiley tells me. You were not here then."

"No," Helen answered softly. "And I am glad they are so fond of her."

"She has improved wonderfully. She is now an excellent scholar in most things and has remarkable musical ability, and she has shown perseverance of the highest order. You have helped to develop her. Girls can do so much for each other if they only view the work in the best and kindest light. I am delighted to be back with

my girls once more, and take up the satisfying home feeling. I grow fonder of real girls every year. I like to watch their development. You cannot always predict it from the beginning either. And I do desire to help them make a wise choice in life. I have seen so many spoiled lives abroad, girls trying to do things they are not fitted for. You cannot always decide because you love a pursuit."

"Do you think I will make a good teacher?"

"I should like to have you when you leave college," was the appreciative response.

"Oh, thank you," and Helen's eyes shone with gratification.

"Something better than that may happen to you, but you may be sure of a place in any event."

Some one called her away. Helen had a mind to join the group on the lawn, there were two new girls among them; then she saw the children and Miss Craven turn the corner and she went to meet them.

Elma was still crying in an unobtrusive fashion and surreptitiously wiping away the tears. Wilma was flushed and was making a proud effort for self-control. Helen reached out her hand and the child took it, falling a little behind so they could have more room in walking.

"I like you," the child said presently. "Not as much as I do Miss Craven, but you will not mind?" glancing up with eyes of entreaty. "You were not here when we came, so of course we couldn't choose. And at first it was very hard to be away from papa. He had loved us for such a long while."

Oh, how could any one crowd out two such fond little girls? How could their father let any one come between?

"Have you any mother—any *own* mother?" the child asked.

"No. She died when I was a little girl. And my father was away for a long while. I lived with an aunt and uncle."

"Oh, I hope she wasn't like Aunt Mary!" was the earnest rejoinder.

"There was a farm and garden, and I used to pull weeds, sometimes, and I hated it. There were six cousins, little and big, and we were a merry lot."

Wilma laughed and squeezed the hand tighter.

"Aunt Mary thought we ought to pull weeds, but Uncle Jacob said we were boarders and he was sure papa wouldn't like it. It makes your hands all rough and grimy. Betty had to do it nearly every afternoon. Oh, I am so glad to be

here, so very glad," and she took two or three little hops. "And then did you come here to school?"

"No, I went to a country school first. I was fourteen when I came here."

"And we shall be eleven in the winter. Where we lived in the city, in the same block there were twins, but one was a boy and one was a girl. It's queer, isn't it! They ought to be alike."

Helen laughed at that.

"How pretty your voice rings when you laugh. Are you going to stay here a whole long year?"

"Yes," was the cordial answer.

"I think then I shall get to loving you almost as much as Miss Craven. You won't mind the tiny little bit, will you? I never loved any one as much except papa. We had such splendid times before the new mother came. I wish there were no new mothers. We used to stay in papa's study so long as we didn't meddle with his papers on the table. We had a little table of our own, and some bookshelves. Miss Markham came in the morning and taught us, and Rosy took us out to walk in the afternoon. Then after the new mother came we went to a real school where there were ever so many children. Sometimes they quarreled and called names. Then we were sent

here last winter. We were dreadfully homesick and strange. We wanted papa so very much. And the lessons were hard. But Miss Craven came and helped us and we were not lonely, but we wanted papa. Did you want your papa?"

"Yes, at times. Then he came back and was with me only a little while when he died."

"When you first came here you wore black gowns. I do not like them."

Miss Craven paused and turned at the step. "Have you been making friends with my Helen?" and she smiled.

"Is she yours? Will you let me have a piece of her sometimes?"

"Which piece would you like?"

Wilma thought a moment. "The piece that talks. That's the tongue. And it has to be fast hold of something, doesn't it? And her hands are so soft. Then her feet are so nice to take a walk. Oh dear, I am afraid I shall want all of her. But then, I can take her a little now and then."

"Elma is very tired. Will you come up stairs with us and be brushed up a little, for it will soon be dinner time?"

Wilma followed without demur. The maid had unpacked the trunk. There were the two little

white beds, the low chairs, the dressing table. Nurse came in to attend to them, but Miss Craven begged to do it this time. She curled their pretty hair; they were not really beautiful children, but in their fresh white frocks they looked very nice. She kissed them fondly, and they all went down together.

"I'm so glad to come back to you," Elma said just under her breath. "You and papa are the only ones I love."

"And Wilma?"

The child smiled with vague sweetness.

"A twin is part of you, isn't it? You couldn't help loving part of yourself if you wanted to, but you would never want to."

There were only a few boarding children and they were mostly motherless. They formed a small group around a small table, where Miss Wiley cared for them and kept them in dainty order. She was very fond of the younger class and very successful with them. Helen had wondered a little at this, seeing that Miss Wiley had a diploma from one college, and was a post-graduate of another institution of distinction. Perhaps one needed to go back to the beginning of things, the beginning of learning even, and see it through childhood's eyes, and not lose the warmth

and vitality, not have the hope and the brightness of aims shrink up until all interest in the person, in the real life had faded and was despised, under a specious term of idealism when there never had been any ideal.

Even now Helen thought she would like to be out on the lawn frolicking with the juniors. She hated to give up girlhood. But she was in long skirts and the graduating class, and they were here in a cluster on the end of the piazza, talking mostly of their summer vacation. Niagara had been included in more than one case. Alice Reid had taken a run over to London. Some cousins were going and she had been asked to accompany them and begged so hard that her father had consented. She had seen London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, the Lake Region and a charming bit of Ireland.

"Next year we are going to Belgium, Holland, and Germany. One of the cousins is vice-principal in a New York public school, and she takes one nice tour every year and isn't hurried and flurried. I promised father I'd study at German good and hard, and be sure to graduate. It's just delightful to go that way, you see so much of the people."

And once Helen had been going in that leisurely

fashion. It was an ideal of the future any way, and Juliet Craven would take her next summer if she expressed a wish to go.

Polly Henderson smiled to herself. She had met her lover this summer, in a funny out-of-the-way place where her father had sent the whole family because it was inexpensive.

"And I can't afford you any luxury beside your schooling," her father had said. "If ever you come to a place where you earn money for yourself, you can please yourself about such things."

Then Ernest Stopford had come down there with his mother because it was her native place. She had passed youth before her marriage, but she had a splendid husband and a fine son who was in his father's importing house. They took a fancy to the Hendersons because there were so many children. And the last week the engagement came about, as great a surprise to Polly as any one. Mrs. Stopford accepted it cordially and invited Polly to spend the Christmas holidays with them. After that she would announce her engagement to the girls, and next summer she would be going abroad as a young bride, for Mr. Stopford had said the next one to be sent over to Paris should be Ernest. And she would never have to earn journeys or clothes or anything. She

did not see the use of coming back to school, but her father had insisted.

Marcia Hyde sat on the step talking nonsense to Miss Logan, who had strayed from her rather severe friend to outside pleasures. The girls were speculating upon the tie that bound them together.

"But there's Miss Craven and Helen Grant," some one had said awhile ago.

"Helen Grant is friendly with every one. She seems to have an inexhaustible nature."

"I'm not sure those diffusive natures are the most satisfactory," was the next comment.

"I do not think you would call her diffusive."

"Girl friendships are not easy to explain. I'm not sure but it is 'the blind necessity of loving' that the poet speaks of, when you are away from home."

So they chattered in little groups. Helen and Juliet were down in the far corner, half hidden by the vines, and only the confused sound reached them, unless some girl raised her voice. Helen had been watching the stars and speculating on other worlds. Turning she saw Juliet leaning her chin on one hand, the head bowed over a trifle, and her eyes with a far-away look.

"You ought to have a picture taken," she cried

with sudden enthusiasm. "You would make—well, a sort of Mona Lisa ; not a nun, but some sort of sister. It's a wonder to me you didn't choose the convent."

"I wanted real life, not solitude. I think I am not truly introspective. I'm trying to get near to people, not keep away from them. But I haven't known how. It is a wonderful gift. It is, as you said last winter, giving of yourself. What a lovely visit that was at Hope! And I have been studying you ever since. But even with the same motive and desire two people cannot do a thing in the same way."

"Why, no. There is individuality. Why, it would make the world tiresome!"

"I don't know why we shouldn't copy the nice traits we find in other people," Juliet said, rather resentfully.

"Oh, we do—sometimes," laughingly. "I have several ideals. I think I shall be copying Mrs. Aldred. I may have a girls' school some day, or a class in college. Then if I had a real home I should like to copy Daisy Bell's mother. You saw her in the summer, but the place to see her truly is the home. There is a beguiling charm in every motion, every word and smile. I don't

know any one who had such a pervasive influence. I like Mrs. Travis very much also."

"I was a little jealous of Daisy after you had made up good friends. But I knew she had some charming ways, and I—"

"You've charmed those Gartney children. How did that come about?"

"They were so shy and lonely, so frightened all the time. You could see it in their eyes. I thought of my advent here. I fancy in actual experience I was about twelve; some girls of that age know a great deal more. You took me by the hand, otherwise I do not believe I could have remained. Oh, you can't think how I longed to have some one love me! And I just guessed how these little girls felt. I couldn't have proffered comfort and affection to older people, but they were not going to be critical. They are so delicate, too, they have been trained in the nice ways of what is called good breeding, I suppose. And you know I had no training."

"You had a natural longing for refinement. Why, I do not see how you kept so much of it, rather how you obtained it living with one queer, rough old man.

"Do they say much about their new mother?

That term tells the whole story; the distance. And I do not see why their father—”

“He is very fond of her, admires her immensely. And he adores his children as well. She isn’t grudging—you can see by the children’s clothing. They have pocket money in abundance; Miss Wiley takes charge of that. They have lived so alone with their father and the governess that they hardly understand the free masonry of children. That is where I could sympathize with them,” and a tender smile crossed the girl’s face.

“I suppose the key note is jealousy. Only a large-minded woman ought ever to accept the children of a dead mother.”

“Or a woman hungering for love and never having been satisfied.”

Helen caught her friend’s hand in an eager clasp. “Something lovely ought to happen to you,” she said in a kind of impassioned tone. “A great house full of people, little and big, and all the love you want.”

Why had so many people loved *her*, Helen wondered?

“Girls, come in and let us have a good sing,” exclaimed Miss Aldred. “Miss Craven must play

for us. We have lengthened out our holiday, and I hope you have had a good time."

"And you are just lovely!" declared one enthusiastic girl presently. "The clock is striking ten and you lengthen out the indulgence. Will you give us another half-hour?"

"We are just a family now and not a school," said Mrs. Aldred. "And, girls, you cannot think how gratifying it is to have you so glad to come back, so eager to go on with your studies, so ambitious, so cordial to each other. I hope it will be a happy and successful year, and that we shall not only strive for some new virtues, but practise those we have already acquired, that our characters may not be like the shifting sand of the sea shore, sparkling, fascinating but forever changing. And now you may have your half-hour for singing."

A very delightful time it proved, and there were heartfelt good nights, as they trooped up the stairs.

"Oh," Helen said with a long breath, "it is so satisfying to live among girls in your girlhood." Yet she looked with a sweet resignation at those months when she was without any such delight, when the vitality of hope and joy was relegated to the background. "Poor father." How many

a time she had breathed a little prayer for the dead. It would not harm her.

Sunday was another glorious day. The girls went to their different churches, the smaller ones in the care of Miss Wiley. Miss Craven had spent a few moments with her two little girls and somehow she felt very happy herself and at rest. A year without any changes or anxiety looked attractive. She was beginning to enjoy being settled.

Mrs. Danforth hurried out of church a little to meet them, smiling and eager.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "wasn't it odd that you should meet Gordon down there at Balem! He has been such friends with the Travis family, but he had not seen you, Miss Grant, in such a long time, yet he said you had grown into just the big girl one could surely predict. And your charming friend, Mrs. Wilmarth! He did enjoy the fortnight so. You must come to the Parsonage some afternoon and let us talk it all over. To think I shall not see him for two, perhaps three, years. But his father was very proud of the appointment."

"We all had a delightful time," Helen replied with her bright smile. She was glad he had en-

joyed it as well. It brought a peculiar nearness to another mother. There were some charming mothers in the world.

CHAPTER X

THE BEGINNING OF THINGS

A WHOLE school year with no break, nothing of importance happening, for there was no one now who had a first claim on her, Helen Grant thought, as she took her place in her classes with enthusiastic gladness. She did so love to study, to acquire knowledge, to reach out into the richness of the whole earth. Not all of it, but a bit here and there; no brain could hold it all. She was a born student. Her old teacher, Mr. Warfield, thought he had made her one, but he had only tilled the ground; the seed had been planted by a Higher Hand.

And beside the study, she found life was growing in breadth and meaning, that each day the mystery was unfolding, the joy becoming more intense, the influences all pervading. It was not a straight line, though duty is often considered that; it was a step one way and another, sometimes the wrong way and then one had to retrace. Why couldn't God have made people so clear-eyed they could see at once!

Yet with her quick sense of fun she soon became the same favorite with the larger girls as she had been with the smaller ones two years before. And girls began to give her confidences. Polly Henderson told her of her engagement.

"Of course you know I had to tell Mrs. Aldred, and mother wrote explaining, but I'm not going to breathe it to another soul. Only I did want *you* to know. I must have some one to rejoice with me. Did you ever know of such a perfect romance?"

Helen was interested. Love matters are such a sweet mystery to the girl who knows nothing about them.

"Generally the mothers don't like it, you see. They're jealous to have their sons love any one else. But Mrs. Stopford isn't. It's queer, but she seems as if she might be Ernest's grandmother. Her hair is snowy white, and she was forty years old when Ernest was born, and had been married seven years. And she wishes she had five, like mother. So she wants Ernest to be married, and she's just old-fashioned enough to think I am real pretty. I have a lovely complexion and color and my hair is a pretty shade. Ernest likes light hair, his is brown, quite dark. He's—well, he isn't handsome, but he is quite tall

and stands up straight and has an air. I think men don't need to be handsome, only nice-looking. And I'm just counting the weeks to Christmas, then I shall count them to June."

"And you won't graduate if you don't study more in earnest," interposed Helen.

"Well, if I just squeeze through it won't matter now. I'm so glad I won't have to teach or do anything. I should hate it. Sophie's next to me and she has a genius for gowns and hats, and mother isn't going to send her away to trade school, though she wants to go. She's at the High School now."

"You must run away," declared Helen. "I have to translate some Latin verses and do a French exercise."

"Do you suppose that pretty little Daisy Bell is engaged? Oh, we used to be great chums. She had two or three lovers, but maybe they weren't real marrying ones. I used to feel jealous when she paraded them out. She had photographs of two. I think she was a flirt."

"Polly, will you run away!" decisively.

"Oh, I wish you were not going to college and could take a little time. I like you the best of any girl in the class. Yes, I really *am* going."

"I won't look at a lover until I am through

college," Helen said sighingly to herself. "Love does make a girl silly;" and she turned to her Latin verses.

She was not a born versifier. Margaret Holden would be the class poet, for she was a real poet. Two magazines had accepted and paid her for some work, one poem and a composition of last year that Mrs. Wiley had said was as fine as most of the magazine work. Margaret was bright and gay, but the poems were curious with a vein of something akin to hopelessness running through them, a world weariness as if she had known the depths of sorrow. There were girls full of fun, there were flippant and superficial ones, and there were two or three taking life with great gravity and with less cause in some ways than Juliet Craven. Miss Kent was one of them. She was so in earnest that she stripped life of most of its graces. She was going to college and then meant to study medicine in which she was strongly interested intellectually.

"But she will never make a successful doctor," said Marcia Hyde, who had a funny way of mapping out girls. "At least, I do not believe she will have the same patient twice—if she or *he* lives. She wouldn't sugar-coat any truth or any pill, but just give you everything in its unadulterated

bitterness. And if there was a remote chance of your dying, she wouldn't make it a bed of roses. There'd be no angels coming to waft your spirit gently away; but you would go out in scientific darkness. I do not see how Miss Logan stands her."

Helen wondered a little as well. Miss Kent was really a sort of shadow in the class. She had all her recitations perfect. She never transgressed a rule. If she went to walk she took a book along, she never joined in any merriment, and the evenings in the parlor she begged off always with some good excuse.

"I do not think it quite right," Mrs. Aldred said to her one day. "You are making life too bare, too cold, too narrow. Each person is capable of adding a little pleasure to the world, of giving some cheer and sympathy, and it is a help. No person liveth unto himself alone, you know."

"But if you have nothing to give? If most of these so-called pleasures seem trivial to you and a waste of time! Life is really a serious matter when you feel that you may be asked to give an account of every moment, every action."

"But if your sins and follies are to be all blotted out through infinite mercy? Can you not trust some of the sweeter, tenderer promises? Life

ought to be strong and helpful to those around us—that is what is meant by not living to one's self."

Miss Kent made no reply.

"I wonder if she has had a great sorrow in her life," Mrs. Aldred remarked to her daughter. "I do not like to pry into girls' hearts and lives, but she certainly is doing a great wrong to herself, as well as to those about her."

Grace Aldred laughed a little. "We had one girl who could ferret out the inmost recesses and secrets," she said. "A Miss Mays, who was here two years. No one is quite as astute now. But she made a great mistake in Miss Craven. I can just see now the surprise of most of them when they learned she was an heiress."

"I wish she had not set her heart upon going to college, but she will follow Helen Grant through fire and flood if there is need. I wish she could marry nicely and have a home of her very own, children of her own. Perhaps the years may have this in store for her,—after they have both been through college."

It seemed to Helen that she was in everything. She wished for an extra day in the week, or if there could be a few hours added to the days. But instead they were growing shorter. Mrs.

Aldred did not believe in burning the candle at both ends, and now the girls were not called so early. Health was one of the important things, it was too precious to be thrown away on education even.

What a glorious autumn it was! Hills and valleys shone in the resplendence of richness and contrast, there was the fragrance everywhere of ripening fruit and the woods were filled with the pungent scent of sun-dried balsams and fallen leaves, and wayside grasses.

Some one quoted Bryant in one of the walks the girls were so fond of, and bewailed the passing of so much beauty.

"I do not think of graves and all that, any more," exclaimed Helen. "All these delights have had their day, and something else beautiful is coming. They are laid aside in their beds of various kinds for a rest and are all to be renewed again. You see it is something to hope for, to expect, and it never disappoints you."

"You are a Whittier disciple, Helen. It is with you 'The best of now and here.' You have such a hopeful disposition, or is it temperament?"

She could remember when she had not been hopeful, but she had gone straight onward. She smiled a little now.

"I think it is accepting what comes, and enjoying it to the full if it is pleasure, and bearing it with what bravery you can if it is pain. And I do not believe any one knows how much strength is given if you ask for it in real earnest, and then use whatever *is* granted. God doesn't send it all at once, or we might think it our own."

"You give one comfort in everything. I even think you could inspire Miss Kent if she would let you get near enough. Did you ever know any one who could hold you so at arm's length?"

Helen thought of her father. But he had been living alone, with books for so many years.

It was quite natural for girls to speculate on one another, especially if anything looked mysterious. Of course Miss Logan must understand.

"Sometimes you do not even know how to tell a trouble," Juliet Craven said in a kind of deprecating tone, soft and sweet, and Helen knew what it meant.

If Helen had no lovers to flash across her thoughts, there were friends who were quite exigent about letters. Her cousin Nat was learning so many useful things concerning farming that made it very interesting. He sent for catalogues, they took two agricultural papers, they were having some nice fruit, and the flowers were

almost like a family of children. Then he had grown well acquainted with the florist at Drewsville, who had offered to take all the violets he could raise from Christmas until spring, and he had a fine bed of them. Joe Northrup rather laughed at that. Everybody went on at the same old gait, and mother worried about Sam, but Nat guessed he had a pretty smart wife. "If we could get an extension of the road from New Alton, and it has been talked of, Hope would have a great boom. We're going to fight for it."

Mrs. Dayton wrote briefly, but she asked for good long letters. Mr. Warfield had had a much better position offered to him at the western part of the State, and she wondered he didn't go. He needed either a change or a wife, he was getting queer and captious. There were two or three girls pulling straws for him, nice girls, too, and it would be a most excellent thing for him to take one of them. "Talk about old maids being queer, I think most bachelors get quite as cranky," was her comment.

But the best letters of all were from Mrs. Wilmarth. She had improved so much, she went out to walk nearly every day. The headaches were not so frequent. She had lived too much alone. At first it had been the serious illness, then dis-

couragement and a general hopelessness. "I begin to understand what an excellent thing it is to do something for those you can really benefit. Help is too good to waste on trivialities, or to proffer to those who have plenty and are not using it. Some of this I have learned from you. I don't believe you will ever quite know all you have done for me the last year. Once I remember you said this kind of help was something to pass along.

"I have found Mrs. Gilbert a great pleasure. Katy had a mind to be jealous at first, but is now very amiable. Mrs. Gilbert is my companion, secretary, and seamstress, and does dozens of things that I used to bother over. She really is not strong enough to fill any arduous position. She has had to wear so hard on herself. At first she had a feeling it was a sort of charity, but with Mr. Wilmarth's assistance we placed it on a business basis. She plays not as beautifully as either of you two girls, but it is a great pleasure to me. And we have formed a little reading circle. Miss Westerly spoke of two girls who wanted to take up a line of useful reading. One is a new teacher in the primary department. So we asked them in once a week, and now we have nine. That's quite like the modern club, isn't it?

Who knows but we may regenerate Hope? Do you recall Meta Henderson? She became engaged to the clerk in the drug store last summer. He seemed a very nice, bright fellow, was above the average, was not one of the town boys. About two months ago he was detected in embezzling funds, and then it came out that he had done the thing before, and very narrowly escaped being sent to prison. Meta was very brave about it, though she did care a good deal for him. She said she could never have confidence in a thief, and as this was his second offense there was less excuse for him. She came into our reading circle and she and Mrs. Gilbert are earnest friends. Of course it made a great stir. Mr. Graham allowed him to go, and we have been discussing whether it was quite right or not. So you see we are having a little practice in ethics. I wish we might see you at Christmas, but I suppose it is not possible."

It was too long a journey and Daisy Bell and her mother had sent an urgent invitation. This time she would go, although she had a divided heart. So many girls were going to remain. Christmas came in the middle of the week. There was to be a Christmas tree for the Sunday School, and on Christmas afternoon and evening and the

next day, a fair to replenish the library and renovate the school room.

Daisy's small note was very urgent and effusive. If Helen cared at all for her, if the old love had not faded utterly out of her soul, she would come. She could have refused Daisy, but she did want to see Mr. and Mrs. Bell.

"Oh," she exclaimed ruefully and yet with a laughing accent—"I've always wanted to be two or three people so I could go separate ways. And I want to stay here. I never do have quite the thing I want. Oh, that is very naughty, too, I've had so many delightful things in my life."

Both girls rejoiced over the new development in Mrs. Wilmarth, the widening out of a truly fine nature that had learned withholding tended to poverty of the soul, and that only in giving of one's self was it enriched and made happier, more useful, filling its rightful place in the world's economy.

"And poor Meta! No, I won't say that. She was fortunate in learning the truth so soon. Oh, do you remember the party we had in the new, unfurnished parlor, and the glad, gay time? I treasure up all the good times, and I suppose thirty or forty years hence I shall be telling a

group of girls what happened and what pleasures we had when I was of their age."

"Helen," Juliet said gravely, "don't you mean ever to marry? There are only two typical 'old maids' in the class, Miss Kent and myself."

"You!" Helen ejaculated in disdain. "You ought to marry and have a house full of children. I wouldn't have guessed you cared so much for children."

"I like little girls. Little boys never attract me. And oddly enough I'm not fond of babies. I couldn't rush at them and kiss them as some of the girls do."

"And frighten the little things into crying! But you are not an effusive girl."

"I might have an orphan asylum just of little girls," glancing up rather archly.

Helen laughed at that fancy.

"But you haven't answered my query. If James Travis had been older you would have been compelled to answer it to him."

"And it would have been 'No,' most decidedly. I don't mean to have any lovers until I am through college."

"And then you want to teach a dozen years or so and journey about. You will be over-critical by that time."

"And I shall not mind being called Miss Grant, I think it sounds rather distinctive. And people will ask if I am any connection of our famous President Grant. It's immensely funny how they want to trace relationship."

They were ~~very~~ busy that last week, so Helen wrote that she would not be able to meet Mr. Bell until Tuesday. The school did thin out. Miss Logan left her friend to make a visit, and the girls wondered a little about it.

Tuesday was the perfection of a winter day. There had been two or three little snow storms, but they had vanished, and the air was mild with no perceptible wind. Juliet and the twins walked down to the station with her. They were full of delight because their father would come on Thursday and stay until Saturday.

There were so many things to think about that the journey appeared really short. And there was Mr. Bell's delightful welcome. She somehow had half expected Willard as well as his father, and then she wondered whether she was beginning to think of boys like the other girls.

The darkness seemed to drop down suddenly, but the house was alight and the big lantern on the porch gleamed cheerfully. Then the door was opened and she was given a motherly clasp.

There were some palms in the hall and in the sitting room two splendid poinsettias in their glowing scarlet. A log fire, too, and a bay window full of blooming plants.

"You must not think we lured you here under false pretenses," Mrs. Bell began when the first greeting was over. "We are all alone. Our young people have gone to a wedding. It was changed ten days ago for Christmas morning and Daisy wouldn't have your visit put off for fear you would not come at all. There is to be an old-fashioned house party; Daisy is one of the bridesmaids and Willard is to be an usher. The marriage is in church immediately after the service; there is to be a grand Christmas dinner, and a dance in the evening. The bridegroom and his party went up this afternoon, but Daisy on last Saturday. We wanted to see you so very much," and the motherly face beamed with tenderness that touched Helen deeply.

"I am glad to come to you," the girl returned with a fervor that could not be mistaken.

"Did you think me dull when you were asking about Daisy on the journey?" and there was an amusing twinkle in Mr. Bell's eyes. "I was afraid I would blunder and let it all out. Even Marjorie is at her sister's, where they have a young

daughter. We feel quite like old people with the birdlings flying out of the nest so often."

There was a touch of regret in the tone that appealed to Helen and she answered with a smile of exquisite appreciation.

"And you are back in your old home at Aldred House."

"A very real home it is, too; the best I have known," the young girl replied with deep feeling.

"It is one of the best schools in the country; not too large for home charms, and Mrs. Aldred is one of the finest women I have ever met. I did so regret that she should be away that last year of Daisy's."

"We all like Miss Wiley very much."

"And her mother may be excellent also. She has been about a great deal and is considered a fine chaperon for young ladies. Only I scarcely knew her and I have a trick of clinging to old friends. But the dinner is waiting and you must be half-starved."

"Oh, no," laughingly replied Helen.

"I suppose the laugh is generally the test of one's voice," exclaimed Mr. Bell, "that is so far as the heartiness and truth goes. Some laughs are so frank and cheerful, you feel to trust them at once. Some have a slightly forced sound,

many are careless with no meaning at all, and we find some ringing false—”

“Meanwhile the banquet waits,” said Mrs. Bell mirthfully.

Mr. Bell took Helen’s arm, and seated her.

“To take up a different subject, I wish there could be a certain number of years set apart for real girlhood, when they were not expected to be young ladies. We push the children along, then the girls, and before they have a taste of real womanhood they have lovers and marry. We rush into everything nowadays. But you haven’t changed very much. And though you will have to be satisfied with two elderly people for a few days, I want to ask you to be a real girl and enthuse over poetry, and insist on all manner of young beliefs, and consider life truly worth living for all the pleasures it will bring.

“It brings a good many, and some of the perplexities turn into them if you give them time.”

“There is philosophy in that, too,” and he smiled. “You have had some of them. And they brightened as they took their flight. I think troubles ought to do this as well as blessings.”

“I’ll try to remember that.”

Yes, her voice had the old girlish ring.

"And what were you doing all summer?" he asked, studying her attentively.

"We—myself and my chum, I suppose girls as well as boys can have chums—went to the seaside with an invalid friend. The sea was glorious, the little village, old and queer, with bits of newness set here and there on the outskirts. One bit of the newness was a charming New York family with seven children in all stages, the eldest girl engaged. They made me think of an English novel. And we had a play for a charity, and musicale for a little chapel. The sails were splendid, the walks were—well queer, among the remnants of pine barrens and stretches of sand. But it had picturesque aspects, and now I know what the ocean is like."

"We tried it up to Nova Scotia, and that was picturesque."

"And you had all the romantic St. Lawrence and the historic cities and places."

Her eyes were alight with interest; in their alertness they questioned him and Mr. Bell was delighted to talk to so attentive a listener. And she knew almost as much about each place as if she had been there, and they branched off into the great struggle between the French and English and the heroes of that period. It pleased him

very much that she should seem as happy with them as if the younger people were about. For he had been having a little experience during the summer of being pushed aside.

They sat around the fire afterward, it seemed so cosy to watch the flames playing hide and seek as if they had some mysterious life.

"I wonder if you are as fond of verses as you used to be? Our modern writers have been criticised so much for lack of true poetic strength that I have compromised and simply call them verses now-a-days. I have some new volumes. I like the sweet tender touches in their simplicity, and I want to hear you read some of them."

"Oh, with pleasure. I think I know your little gift-book all by heart," and she raised appreciative eyes. She never knew how near she had come to losing it.

CHAPTER XI

A GIRL IN LOVE

SHE found in the guest chamber a box of pansies in bloom. There was Daisy's room much more ornate than when she had last seen it, full of all manner of keepsakes and souvenirs. How strange it was to be here and not see Daisy. She would marry presently and go away, and Willard also. They would be left here alone,—oh, no, there would be grandchildren. If she had been born in just such a home and with just such a mother! This mother would understand the many wants and mysteries that often crowded a girl's heart to pain. She had envied girls with charming mothers, she had played at daughterhood, but to have it real and like this! And a father to take delight in one's girlish fancies!

She uttered a very earnest prayer. It was full of thankfulness for all the good and blessed things that had come in her life and that God would keep her continually thankful. Then she put out the light and fell asleep.

Christmas morning was beautiful; she was glad

of that. They were to drive over to Woody Crest, five miles, and keep Christmas with the Reverend Lawrence Hollis, since he could not have his betrothed. It was one of the new railroad stations on a sort of knoll with a slope of two miles or so down to the river. There were some beautiful residences shut up now for the winter, a cluster of smaller houses and country streets with well made side walks, then to the eastward farms and woodland. A pretty chapel had been erected in the summer, mostly a gift from a generous woman, and by spring there was to be a rectory and a bride.

"Come and help me gather my Christmas offering," Mrs. Bell said, leading the way to a room turned into a conservatory. "It is my diversion in the winter, for I do not care much for driving about in the cold."

Helen drew a long breath. She wondered where the pansies had come from. There were brilliant geraniums in bloom, not a few lovely roses and clusters of white ageratum. The violets had been cut and bunched the day before, and now Mrs. Bell filled a great basket, fairly rifling the small place.

Helen was in a maze of delight, and most enthusiastic.

"Now you must put on your wraps at once as we must get there before service, and when we come home we will talk flowers," she said.

It was just delightfully cold, the girl insisted with glowing eyes and cheeks, and far down the valley a chime seemed to answer the soft bell on the hill. How beautiful it all was, and how it had changed since the summer she had driven about here. Afar off was the slow-tided river, looking blue in the reflection of the sky. Every branch and twig seemed to stand out with a tip of gold.

There had been some flowers sent from the city and the small chapel was beautifully decorated with evergreens. Helen remembered that Willard had spoken of his friend Mr. Hollis, and suggested a possible lover for Marjorie. He had a fine face and figure, and a clear well-trained voice, and Helen was much moved by the impressive service and the ready responses.

Afterward he came to speak to them. There was to be a Christmas tree for the children at three in the afternoon, and at four he was to take the train to Rutledge, some thirty miles below on the same road, to the Townes', where he was to enjoy a Christmas dinner with his betrothed.

The Bells were to have a noon dinner so that both servants could have the evening.

"We have not been alone for years on this day," Mr. Bell said. "So, Helen, we are doubly glad to have you. This wonderful wedding was appointed first for New Year's eve, but for some reason the bridal party wanted to sail on Saturday, so it was hurried up a little. And Annis pleaded to have Marjorie stay with her. But we will keep the feast all the same."

It seemed to Helen that she was the entertainer. They wanted to hear about her father and how near she had come to being spirited away, and many things that could not have been explained in letters. And she heard about their meeting the Duer party at Montreal and traveling with them for a fortnight and Miss Duer and her brother visiting them in the early fall. Mrs. Newell was an older married sister, and there was one in San Francisco where Dr. Duer, the father, had made his fortune and died.

It was not until the next day that Helen learned the little dissatisfaction that had grown out of this intimacy. They had visited the conservatory and found some cheerful signs of coming bloom, and then Mrs. Bell had brought her sewing. Helen was crocheting a bead bag, just then the

delight of a girl's heart. The conversation had veered around to Daisy.

"I don't know but that I ought to leave this for Daisy to tell you herself, but I would like you to know how I, how *we* feel about it. Daisy thinks she is very much in love and we are putting off the engagement, but I fancy they consider it that themselves. Mr. Duer left a large fortune to each child. Harlan Duer is twenty-four, is good-looking, well-mannered, was two years at Harvard and a year at a German university. He and Evelyn were abroad with this sister after the father died. They are very fashionable society people, yet I must admit not quite spoiled. Evelyn is what would be called a fascinating girl. She marries an Englishman who is an under secretary in some governmental position, indeed now she is his wife," smiling. "She took a tremendous fancy to Daisy, but I did not suppose it would be lasting. The three were a great deal together since Evelyn's lover could not be here. And then Daisy wanted them invited here, and to my surprise they came. Afterward they insisted that Daisy should come to the sister's in New York, Mrs. Newell, who it seems lives in elegant style. Willard went up

there, too. And then the young man asked Daisy to marry him."

"Oh!" Helen exclaimed in surprise.

"The other engagements have been so satisfactory to us. Mr. Towne is not rich, but a fine, honorable man and has a good position in a bank. Mr. Hollis has from an old uncle a life income, the principal of which will go to his children. It is only a moderate one, but it makes him less dependent on his salary. I could not wish a better husband for Marjorie, and he has qualities which will win for him a fine standing in religious work. But this young man is a society idler, agreeable, has numberless charming traits; mind, I do not call them qualities. I suppose most mothers would consider it an excellent match. But Daisy still seems such a child to us, and whether this is really love or only a girlish infatuation we cannot decide. Mr. Bell does not approve of it, although we have heard no derogatory stories about the young man. Several Californian friends have vouched for him. The trustee of the estate is very anxious for him to marry and settle down, though part of the fortune will be held in trust for children. But I am afraid he may tire of Daisy presently. The matter seems like one of those sudden flames that burn

themselves out. And there are so many divorces nowadays. So we have not consented to a regular engagement. Miss Evelyn insisted upon Daisy for a bridesmaid. There were to be five and a maid of honor. I suppose it was a very grand affair. The Newells seem to have no end of money. I did so hope we should keep Daisy awhile. Marjorie will be married at Easter and I am delighted to have her so near, but I do not think Mr. Hollis will remain many years at Woody Crest."

"It seems so strange—engaged," Helen said musingly. "Yet there are two or three girls in the graduating class engaged."

"Well, I suppose we shall have to admit it is that," the mother sighed. "But we shall not consent to a speedy marriage. Daisy really has no idea of the gravity of life. I am afraid we have spoiled her. She was a rather delicate child, and the youngest. I could not bear to give up my baby. Oh, Helen, I hoped you two would be firm and lasting friends. I was so sorry you did not come back to school. But you had a sacred duty, and I think you went through it bravely."

"I am afraid I was not always brave or cheerful. I did not want to go to England, and the

life father had planned out looked so hard and unattractive to me. I thought I should have no friends to talk to, and he did not approve of girls corresponding. It seemed then as if there were two of me and one tried to be resigned, while the other kept up a mental protest."

"There are many trials of faith. Perhaps I I shall have mine," and a sorrowful expression crossed Mrs. Bell's sweet face. "We can pray for the cup to pass but we must add the rest of it. And no one need drink the cup of bitterness until he comes to it, I suppose."

"I think if father had really loved me and wanted me for companionship, I could have gone willingly. But he had lived so long in solitude and lost interest in modern things."

Mrs. Bell understood what it would have been to the bright, joyous girl, so eager in her friendships, so full of real living.

"We all longed so to see you last Christmas. And I was very sorry for the misunderstanding between you two."

"You see we expected to sail so soon, and I knew father would not fit me out for any festive occasion. So just at the last I asked this Miss Craven to make me a little visit. There was no real plot in it, but I suppose it looked so."

"Daisy was too hasty, and I know she regretted it afterward for she told me it was all a mistake. And how does it fare with your friend? Do you still keep together? I dare say there are some very interesting girls in school."

"I must tell you a little of her story," Helen said. "Lives are so different. And the events that seem full of romance as you look at them from the outside are often sorrowful within."

Mrs. Bell was very much interested, but the dusk was coming on and she laid her sewing in her lap. Then there was a stir of steps, the door opened and a young man dropped his suit case with a bang.

"Oh, mother!" catching her in his arms.

"Let me light up. We were hardly expecting you so soon. And father?"

"He has gone round to the stable. He meant to come home an hour earlier, and I struck him just in time. Oh, Miss Grant!"

Helen rose. Why, Willard was really a young man, and she flushed a little.

"You look so much taller. And your hair is done up. You seem—"

"But I have not reached the age of discretion yet," she returned merrily. "I have had a guar-

dian appointed. So I suppose I am not yet entitled to my own sweet will."

"'Life will not flow as rivers flow'," he quoted laughingly. "But rivers are sometimes obstreperous in spite of the poet. And are you well versed in Greek by this time?"

There was a light trill in her voice that suggested laughter, and her eyes sparkled with mirth.

"Was I very stupid?" she inquired. "Mrs. Bell, was it dreadful? I can see myself sitting on the porch step with all those hieroglyphics chasing each other about, and when you had captured one it turned into something else and left you mourning the total depravity of Greek accents and signs. But I had a splendid preceptor in the winter and am really—fairly good."

Yes, this was Helen Grant with the merry yet earnest note in her voice, the gay, glad humor shining in her eyes. There was a bit of white crêpe at neck and wrists, and her handkerchief tucked in her belt that looked like a cluster of white blossoms. She stood up so straight and frank and honest, yet there was a grace about her, a certain harmoniousness that some of the fashionable girls he had seen had not compassed in all their training.

"And you left Daisy,—" began the mother.

"Oh, they would not hear of losing her. There's to be another grand something to-night, part of an opera with some singers from the city. And on Saturday the party are coming down to a breakfast, I believe they call it, and then to wish the young couple *bon voyage* on the steamer which sails at three. I am to meet them, and bring Daisy home."

Mr. Bell entered. Willard went to his room for a few touches of toilet, and they were soon settled around the dinner table. They were all eager to hear about the wedding.

"It was like a page out of a story. The Newells, that is Mr. Newell's family, are southerners and own some sea island plantations. He is a great cotton broker in New York. And his mother is a handsome old picture. I don't believe any queen ever surpassed her. And her manners are simply superb! I liked her the best of any one. The house was magnificent; I should call it a palace. And such dressing, such a glitter of jewels, well, I can't do it any justice. I really felt a little uncertain about Daisy at first, but she looked like a fairy. We have never made any great ado about her beauty, but she *did* look lovely. Mrs. Newell would make her wear a great chain of pearls, and she looked as if they

had grown on her. It really was not a vulgar show, but something beautiful and delightful to remember. I am glad I went although I didn't want to a bit, and if I had not known Miss Travis I am sure I couldn't have accepted the invitation."

"Miss Annie Travis?" queried Helen.

"Yes, do you know her?"

Helen explained about meeting her in the summer.

"That's odd, too. The Travis people are some of the solid old New Yorkers, and a delightful family. Our firm attends to Mr. Travis's law matters. You need not think I am going up among the aristocracy on my own personal standing," he laughed over to Helen.

She thought the descriptions almost like fairy land. And Daisy was among them, would be a member of the charmed circle. She did not envy her; it seemed just the place for her to fit in. Yet to go out of such a simple home!

"Miss Elsie Travis was married a month ago, a quiet kind of church wedding, for Mr. Osborne had to be in Washington," went on Willard. "Was the son down there at the seaside? Did you like him?"

"He is a sort of big, rather over-indulged boy,

just beginning his education," she replied with a gleam of amusement.

"I like them all very much. They really enjoy life. But it seems as if the others had too much, they are continually studying what amusement they shall have next. Someone said: 'Oh, there isn't anything new, only you have to invent new ways of doing old things.' Some of the guests were envying Miss Duer's trip abroad, and she said: 'Oh, there won't be anything new to see, I've done it all. Only we may go round the world.' Think of seeing all the countries of the world!"

It was after they had made a circle round the cheerful fireplace that Mrs. Bell inquired suggestively about Mr. Duer.

"What astonishes me in the matter is that he should really want to marry Daisy when there are rich society girls on every hand," was Willard's reply. "Of course Daisy has charming manners and is a well educated girl as girls go, and some of the society belles I thought rather rude and commonplace, perhaps it was the contrast with the finer breeding. And two of them really threw themselves at Mr. Duer. I'm afraid you will have to give in *ma mère*, for he is devoted to Daisy. And she just held her way regally. She

certainly has a very fascinating adaptiveness. But I like Larry worlds better, not because he is a parson either. After awhile I should think life would begin to feel so useless. What is your opinion of it, Miss Helen?"

"I haven't tried much of the pure pleasure side, and nothing of the overflowing wealth. I was delighted when I found myself enough of an heiress to be sure of going to college. Though I think I should have worked my way through somehow."

"And what about this remarkable book you had a hand in? Why, you are almost an antiquarian."

"Do I look like one?" She flushed and laughed. "I only copied and sometimes straightened out involved sentences and transcribed some notes of father's."

"He was quite a wonderful scholar, it seems. It is good there are some men willing to 'leave the warm precincts of the cheerful day' and root among the ruins of bygone ages. I could not do it. I love the cheerful day and the people in it, but we find those old barbarians were quite grand folks after all. We shall leave no such ruins behind us."

"But we may leave something really better on humanitarian lines," said his father. "Knowledge

and kindness are more widely diffused. We have had the Golden Rule, though we do not all live up to it."

They had a delightful evening, though Mrs. Bell told Willard in a sweet, motherly fashion that he might be excused if he was tired after his dissipation, and when she saw that he was resolved not to accept the permission she proposed that they should all retire early.

"What a charming girl Helen Grant is!" Mr. Bell said enthusiastically. "They were almost like two comrades comparing notes, and laughing over episodes. There's nothing boyish about her either, and none of that acting for effect, and she looks at you with such clear, honest eyes. She knows so many interesting topics to talk about. Her description of the sun rising up out of the sea was fine. She uses her eyes for better purposes than to study her neighbors' clothes."

It was almost noon when Willard rose and then he berated himself soundly for losing time. Mr. Bell had gone down to the city. The day was raw and cold, with now and then a dash of snow in small round pellets.

But they had a very enjoyable time, talking, reading, playing checkers, and finding no end of amusing things to laugh about, referring often

to Mrs. Bell quite as if she were their compeer. It was pleasant not to be set a little aside as was often the case with the older people.

Saturday morning Willard had to go to the city, but Marjorie and her lover came up to lunch. "We were so glad you could come when it turned out this way," she said to Helen. "It was quite a break in our usual home festival. We had such a gay Christmas last year. It is natural for young people to go their way and make new centres, but I realize that it is hard for those left behind. I shall not go very far. And we did hope Daisy would have a long, happy girlhood, for she still seems such a child to us. I do hope you have not felt you were neglected."

"I've had such a lovely time with your mother," Helen rejoined, her face in a glow of satisfaction. "Oh, I couldn't ever feel that way here. The very house has a home atmosphere that goes to your heart."

It was dusk when the three arrived home, Mr. Bell smiling and feeling as if he had rescued his daughter from a grave danger, Willard rather annoyed from some cause, but Daisy such an incarnation of style and prettiness and indescribable charm that Helen stood amazed. Her dark green broadcloth suit with its beautiful fur trim-

mings, her hat to match with two drooping white plumes and a knot of soft pink under the brim, made her a truly lovely picture. But on a second glance you saw that she was pale and her eyes were heavy.

Her mother pressed her fondly to her heart. Marjorie gave her the warmest of welcomes, and Helen's tone was full of tenderness. They would not let her go up stairs; Marjorie took her coat and hat and put her in a chair by the fire for she was cold from her drive.

Then they had dinner; but Daisy declared she wasn't a bit hungry, the "breakfast" had been so long and so elaborate, and she discoursed eloquently upon that and the bride who was nearly smothered with flowers upon the steamer.

Afterward she exclaimed: "Now I'm going upstairs and put on a wrapper and lie on the bed and have Helen tell me all about school and the girls. I'm not a bit sleepy, but awfully tired, and you've had Helen all this time and now it is my turn. Come, Helen."

Helen rose smilingly.

"I should think you'd want to sleep two full days after all this carousing," said Willard.

"You might be more refined." There was a touch of fretfulness in Daisy's voice.

"Don't tease, Willard," said his mother. "We have had a delightful time with Helen."

"And it *was* my plan," subjoined Daisy.

"Shall I come and help you?" asked Marjorie.

"No, Helen will be lady's maid. I've really had a maid and I found it delightful. She thought I had lovely hair. And some girls do have such a skimpy little lot that they have to wear almost a wig," and Daisy gave a rather thin, sarcastic laugh.

The two girls went upstairs. The room was delightfully warm, there was a table of small plants in bloom over by the window.

"Help me off with some of these things. Isn't my suit elegant? It was my Christmas present from the family. I told mamma they could put all their money together, and get me a lovely silk-lined suit. The cloth feels like satin. And the making is simply exquisite. And look here!"

She slipped a ring on her finger. Iridescent rays seemed to flash about the room.

"Oh, Daisy! Are you really engaged?"

"Well—" Daisy flushed, then laughed a little. "It was my Christmas, for I promised mamma I would not make a real engagement. And I have the loveliest bracelet—all the bridesmaids had them, only the jewels were different. Mine

is turquoise because I was so fair, and it is fine, I can tell you. Hang up my skirts in the closet and put my waist over that little chair. Marjorie made this white eiderdown wrapper for me, isn't it a dear! And hunt up those crocheted slippers there in the bag. Now I'm going to lie here among the pillows and you sit just there, so I can see your face without turning, for I want to tell you the whole story from beginning to—oh," checking herself suddenly. "I like to have said 'end'. The end will be marriage of course. I'm not going to have a year's engagement either. But it's been the dearest, sweetest romance, and such a surprise! Why, I never imagined such a thing! I felt that somehow he was a general admirer of pretty girls, rather a butterfly. He has a way of making the loveliest speeches, and his manners are simply elegant." She had been settling herself on the bed and pulling the fleecy blanket over her, pushing and kneading the pillows, and then gave a sigh of content.

"But you were not to talk—" interposed Helen. "You are pale as a ghost."

"Oh, don't you want to hear? That's unkind of you! A friend ought to be all eagerness to know about her friend's good fortune."

"Why, yes; but you are tired—"

"Oh, I've danced and been driven about and had all sorts of fun, and seen the most magnificent things, gowns and jewels and everything. It's been splendid! Of course I'd naturally be tired, but lying here is so comfortable. Only—if you do not want to hear," with a rather fretful emphasis.

"Of course I am interested. And—surprised."

"Mamma has told you?"

"A little, yes. That you had a very ardent lover."

"He is magnificent and I love him. I know I can never love anyone else," and she gave a sigh of rapture.

CHAPTER XII

WHICH IS BETTER, LOVE OR FRIENDSHIP?

"I CAN'T see why he isn't taken up as cordially as Gerald Towne—or—well I suppose a clergyman is put up on a little higher plane. And the other girls made their choice. Then I don't see why Mr. Duer should be toiling and moiling when he has plenty of money to live on. It might be taking away business from some one who needed it. And, oh, Helen, it is too utterly splendid to have everything you want without considering whether you can afford it or not. I didn't think first that he really cared for me. I liked Evelyn so much. We traveled together, you know, and she took one of those overwhelming fancies to me. She is just a year older than I am. And when Mr. Duer spoke I was—well, I did sort of resent. I wasn't going to be flattered and perhaps laughed at afterwards for being so—credulous. So I think I was careful enough. But he was so earnest and he made love so splendidly that I just couldn't put him off or disbelieve. He was very manly about it and ex-

plained to papa at once. Why, I think almost any one would be glad to have a daughter marry so well, but truly I did not think of the money at first. Then they both said I was too young and the acquaintance had been too short, and a dozen foolish objections. Mamma coaxed me to give him up. Papa said we knew so little about him. But he gave some fine references; Mr. Newell and the trustee who manages the estate, and still they wouldn't consent to an engagement. It was really unjust. Suppose he had turned angry and gone off—why my heart would just have broken. He wrote such darling letters, they would have convinced any one. Oh, Helen, love is the sweetest thing in the world, and it isn't my nature to take it tranquilly like the other girls. They are so different in temperament. Then Evelyn's lover wrote about his coming over to be married, and they asked both of us to join the bridal party. Mother thought I ought to decline, but our bridal gowns were to be made in New York, a gift of course; and Evelyn and Mr. Duer came and mamma positively couldn't resist. Evelyn had the loveliest fashion of coaxing. And then Harlan pleaded for an engagement, but papa only promised to take it into consideration. But Harlan says we are just as truly engaged

before God as if the whole world had consented. He has been so sweet about it. Papa isn't sure but he has some bad habits, as if young men with no end of money were not always a little gay and giving suppers and all that. Why, there isn't anything else for them to do. And we had the loveliest time these few days. Some of the girls made big eyes at him, I tell you, and I couldn't help feeling proud. For I did not try to catch him, truly, though girls are doing that all the time. Don't you think it's very hard not to have it all clear sailing?"

"But your father and mother want to do the very best they can for your future happiness, and marriage is such a solemn thing," protested Helen.

"This is best because it is the happiness I want."

"But you have only known him such a little while."

"I don't believe that counts for very much. There is a girl, a woman rather, down in the town that used to be quite a friend of my sister Annis. She was engaged three years, and had known her lover quite a long while. They went away after they were married and last summer she came home with her baby not two years old.

Her husband drank and neglected her and finally knocked her down one day and hurt her dreadfully. Then her father went and brought her home. 'And I suppose if it had been a six months' engagement everybody would have blamed it to that.'

Helen was silent. Mr. and Mrs. Bell must have some good reasons for their course, she thought.

"He is coming in about a fortnight and then he wants the thing settled so that he can visit me as often as he likes. And Mrs. Newell was very sweet to me and asked me to come and spend a week with them in the city house, before they go to Bermuda. It's just splendid to be able to travel about wherever the wish takes you."

"Oh, my dear Daisy, you are desperately tired, and we must stop. You have done all the talking."

"Oh, I could talk all night. Are there any engaged girls in the class?"

"Yes, two or three."

"But won't it make a stir when mine is announced!" and Daisy gave a thin, exhausted laugh.

"I am going to bed." Helen rose, leaned over and kissed her. "Your eyes are set in the violet

shades of fatigue. Now that is poetical. All the rest you shall tell me to-morrow, no—on Monday.”

“It won’t hurt to descant on your happiness if it is Sunday. Helen, you are growing staid and cold. You haven’t a bit of enthusiasm,” in a complaining tone.

“Good-night. Good-night. And that is your mother’s voice.”

Helen pushed the door wider open, and smiled at Mrs. Bell.

“I was coming to inquire if the confidence was nearing its end,” she remarked pleasantly.

“The conclave has broken up, and we are both sleepy, or ought to be. Good-night,” and Helen passed to her room.

But she did not sleep at first. The subject had two such decided, such opposite sides. She was quite sure, deep in her heart, that Mr. and Mrs. Bell were right. They were tender and fond and desired Daisy’s happiness most of all. They had experience and were better able to judge. Yet she had been deeply moved by the fascinating mystery of love. She had never come near the romantic side before. Mrs. Wilmarth now and then adverted to her young days, but love had flowed in a tranquil stream. She really wanted

Daisy to have her heart's desire, but would it be best? It was a perplexing tangle and like a healthy girl she fell asleep in the midst of it.

Daisy did not come down the next morning. She was soundly asleep and her mother would not disturb her.

"I am afraid fashionable life would wear her out," Mrs. Bell said with some anxiety. "She seems well as a general thing, but I do not think she has much reserve strength."

"But weddings do not happen every day, even in high life, I mean in the same families," laughed Willard.

"But the guests go from one to the other, and to house parties. A cousin of Gerald's was in one day, complaining of the multiplicity of engagements, and said every week was filled until Easter," commented Marjorie. "It seems a regular treadmill round. And so many functions are just alike. There is no time for real thought or enjoyment."

Helen went to church with Mr. Bell, Marjorie and Willard, and though the morning was cold, the sun shone with a splendor that almost deceived one. She felt so tranquilized with the beautiful service, which was almost like that of Christmas day, and Mr. Hollis' sermon was full

of comfort and joy. Helen was truly sorry when it ended.

Marjorie was to stay to luncheon with a friend. Through the wintry weather there was a short afternoon service after Sunday School, then Mr. Hollis would bring Marjorie home and remain all night.

Daisy was still in her room. She had taken her bath, eaten a little toast and then gone back to her bed. Helen ran in, alert and glowing. Daisy had been crying.

"I can't help it," she sobbed. "I've been so supremely happy for a week, and now mamma has just plunged me into misery. She thinks she cannot consent to my liking Harlan and it is so cruel. It isn't always what one says, you feel it in the tone, you see it in the eyes. There, run down and get your lunch and then come up to me. I should die if I didn't have some one to talk to, and Helen you *must* take my side."

She entered the dining room with a rather grave face, but it soon relaxed in the comforting talk of the higher purposes of life. Mr. Bell had no extravagant views of sacrifice, but kept the cheerful tenor of a belief in the lovable qualities that helped each one on his journey, that

smoothed rough ways, that counted in "the least of these."

Helen almost dreaded to go back to Daisy.

"Read her to sleep again," suggested Willard. "You will have all day to-morrow to talk to her, and Tuesday—"

"Oh, but I must go back Tuesday. Yes, I have positively promised," reading disapproval in his eyes.

"Oh, we can't spare you. Surely you do not begin lessons on the first day of the year?"

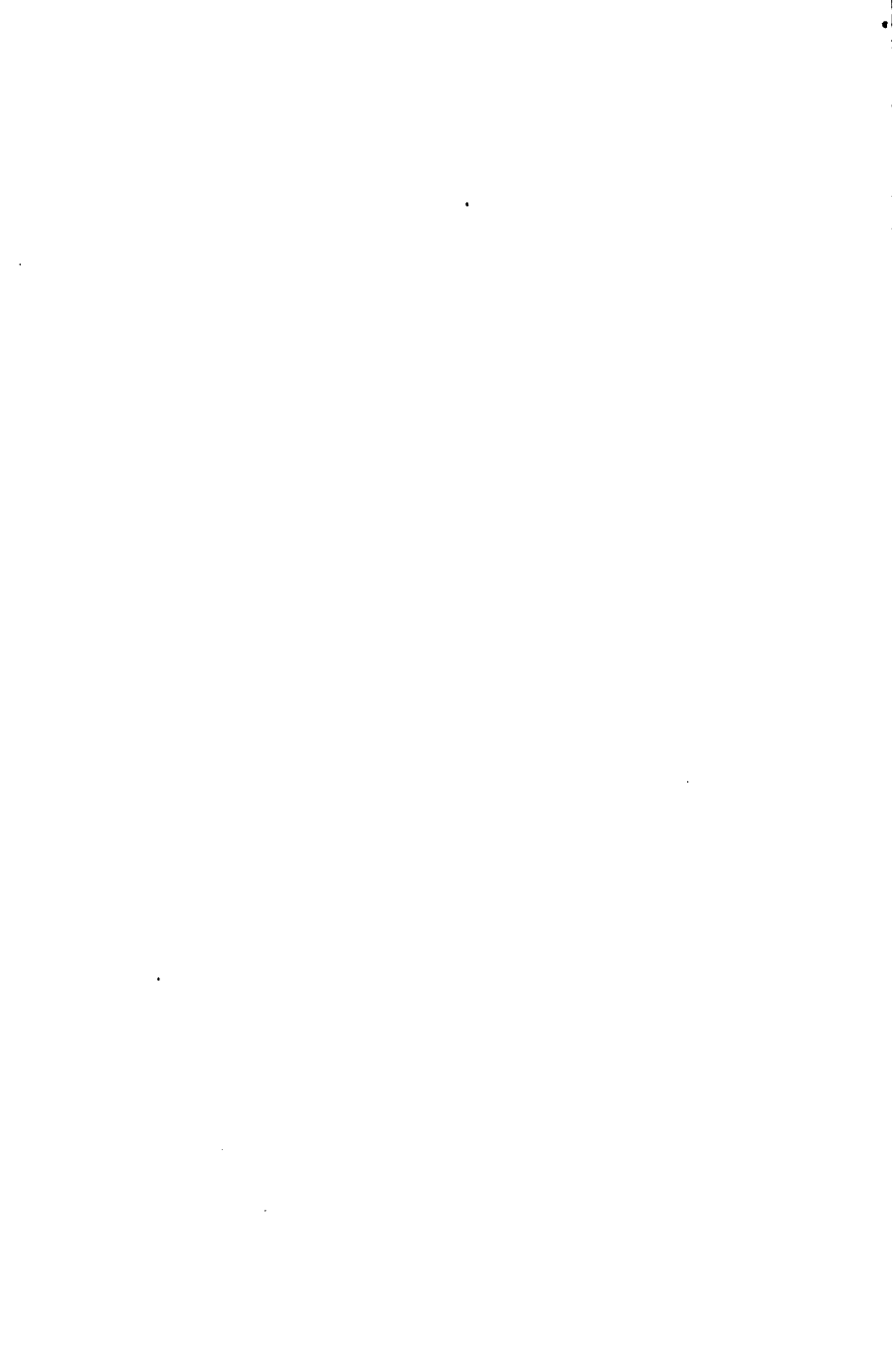
"No, but we make resolves and get ourselves into good habits," she returned archly.

"O dear! There were so many things I wanted to talk over. You heard I was one of the honor men, didn't you? And father was so proud to have me offered this position. But he and Mr. Fiske have been friends a long time. And you don't know—it was real hard to give up a vacation, for I had been studying like a Trojan—they didn't study, but they worked," laughingly. "And now I have the hours off for the law school. It is a splendid chance, and I'm bound to get through in two years. You are so interested in the real work of life. And as I am not a millionaire I must win both place and fortune."

"Oh, I know you will." How eager and alert



“Helen” — Daisy raised on one elbow. — *Page 223.*



WHICH IS BETTER, LOVE OR FRIENDSHIP?

he seemed, in a way suggesting Gordon Danforth. She liked his inspiring ambition.

Daisy's little silver bell sounded.

Willard made a very fine, but she smiled as she glided away.

"I thought you were never coming!" There was longing and fretfulness tangled together, and a little frown on the brow, an expression of crossness in the curves of the sweet mouth. Helen wondered if any one ever before united disagreeableness and prettiness with the charm Daisy Bell possessed.

"You know I didn't see you all last summer. You might have come that last two weeks of vacation—"

"Oh, there were clothes to look up and other visits to make. My aunt thought it very hard that I couldn't spend more time with her."

"Is that Mrs. Wilmarth rich?"

"Oh, no. Just comfortable. But there are no children and she is very lonely, and never will be very well."

"Does she want to adopt you?"

"But I had my life planned out."

"Helen"—Daisy raised on one elbow; she was lying on the bed in a pretty silken gown ruffled with lace, and a fleecy scarf thrown over one

he seemed, in a way suggesting Gordon Danforth. She liked his inspiring ambition.

Daisy's little silver bell sounded.

Willard made a wry face, but she smiled as she glided away.

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"Helen"—Daisy raised on one elbow; she was lying on the bed in a pretty silken gown ruffled with lace, and a fleecy scarf thrown over one

shoulder—"is that Miss Craven still in school and what on earth is she going to do? We met Mrs. Davis at the Thousand Islands, but I didn't remember her until just at the last. You know she came to school one day and her husband is Miss Craven's guardian. What a farce it was to pretend to be poor, a sort of clap trap, forlorn old uncle coming to your door scheme—"

"She didn't pretend to anything," interrupted Helen with a touch of indignation. "Her attire was very nice, only she was timid and felt strange."

"I suppose you know she's very rich in her own right. She doesn't spend half her income and that is piling up. And she's awfully queer. Mrs. Davis would do anything for her, wanted to take her to Washington this winter. What earthly good does all the money do her? I should envy her if I hadn't a rich lover," laughing triumphantly.

"Oh, no, you wouldn't change places. You would rather be pretty and attractive."

"Well—beauty is a drawing card. She went off to some country place this summer, and Mrs. Davis said likely as not some scheming adventurer would get round her and marry her for her money. Doesn't she ever have any lovers?"

Helen's color changed a little. Was it deceitful to let the matter go this way? Daisy would resent their being together all summer, and evidently she knew nothing about it.

"She hasn't had any thus far."

"Does she tell you everything?"

"Why—I don't know," with a rather indecisive smile.

"You are going to college together?"

"That is the present plan."

"She is sure to be an old maid. And there's nothing so wonderful about your friendship after all. I don't see how you can really love her—what is there to love? Now if I had been a rich girl I should have said before vacation, 'Let us go off somewhere, Canada or California, or even abroad and have a grand time. I will pay all expenses.' That is what a good deal of money is for. And when I am married you will see! I shall send for you, next vacation, likely, and you will have to come. Harlan is just as generous as I would like to be. He thinks the only true use of money is to give pleasure. And you've had such a great disappointment in your life some one ought to make it up to you."

"Great disappointment?" echoed Helen.

"Why, that about Mrs. Van Dorn and going

abroad. If you had been older it would have proved really heart-breaking. And I am going to make up some of these hard things to you. It is one of the blessed indulgences to which we can treat ourselves."

"You are very good," Helen replied with a slight quiver in her voice. "But Miss Craven knows—well I suppose I *am* proud in a certain way—" and she hesitated.

"But you will take some nice pleasures from me! It is generally in the way they are proffered. And I shall have a lovely home—I don't just know where. Harlan is fond of California, most of his life has been spent there. The Newells have three homes. I'd like to have one in Washington I think. You would see the people long enough to get acquainted with them. And you could come for Christmas. And the summers you should spend with me. I mean you shall be like a sister, Helen."

"But—you have so many friends—"

"I can have *them* between times," with an arch smile, quite like herself.

"It is a charming air castle."

"But you'll find it the real thing. I am so glad to be rich. I should have loved Harlan if he had been comparatively poor, but I never

would marry a very poor man. I *do* love luxury. It was just splendid at the Newells'. We shall not be as rich as that, but maybe Harlan will begin some business when we are married. Part of his money is in a mine and it yields tremendously. Isn't that a kind of business?"

"Why—yes," hesitatingly.

Then Daisy went on rhapsodizing about her lover. Helen could hardly take it in as a real matter. It seemed as if something would happen to spoil it all, and oh, she prayed with sudden irrepressible fervor that there might not. It would kill Daisy. Were other girls as enthusiastic? Polly Henderson's chum said Polly was silly over her lover. Daisy was full of romance and hope and a delicious joy. It was the way some of the girls in story books loved. Of course if there had been no love there couldn't have been many books. Travels—yes there was often a love story told in a biography.

The dusk dropped down while the soft voice went purling on, and Marjorie came to announce dinner.

"I'd like to come down if I might in this invalid gown. I don't want to be dressed up. Mr. Hollis wouldn't mind?" coaxingly.

"Why, no, dear. We shall be glad to have you join us."

Daisy was very winsome in her half-invalid role. Every one was solicitous about her and the pensive sweetness surprised even Helen. Afterward she sat in an easy chair and leaned her head on her father's shoulder, with Helen on the other side, whose hand she held. She seemed to draw Mr. Hollis into her circle as well. The Newells were church people and most of them had gone to an early Christmas service. There was a pretty chapel in the neighborhood that two or three wealthy families supported.

Mr. Bell asked for some music presently. Marjorie and the two young men rose.

"Come, Helen," exclaimed Willard.

"Helen belongs to me," interposed Daisy placing her hand caressingly on the girl's shoulder.

"But you have had her all day, and you can have her to-morrow."

"And I want her now. We'll have just the four voices with hers," added Marjorie.

"I'm going to take her upstairs in a few moments, I am getting tired. Go and sing without her."

Helen intercepted a beseeching glance from

Mr. Bell to Willard, who went slowly to the parlor.

Daisy kept up a tender little chat with her father, just enough to disturb Helen's enjoyment with the singing. So she did not object when Daisy rose to retire, although she hated to lose the melody of the beautiful old hymns.

"I want you to read poetry to me," Daisy said when she was settled in the bed. "Some of those shorter poems of Mrs. Browning's. 'Bertha in the Lane' is so beautiful, and so pitiful, too."

Helen read her to sleep, but they had ceased singing, and it was too late to go downstairs.

Mrs. Bell came to her room and they had a tender little talk.

"I'd like you to be Daisy's adopted sister," she said. You see, Annis and Marjorie were near together and dear companions, but Daisy, as one may say, has had to go outside for friendship, and I think it has not always been judicious. Two girls growing up in a family learn to consider each other more. We have spoiled her, and now we hardly know how to lead her back. And this late episode has rendered her more imperious. She did talk a little once of going to college, but the doctor said she was not strong enough."

Helen was not experienced enough to comfort, though she longed to. And Mrs. Bell had been so wise and tender to her. If she *had* been a daughter of the house.

"But then I wouldn't have been Helen Grant," she said to herself afterward. And in spite of the various chances and changes she had a strong liking for her own personality.

The trunk was delivered on Monday morning. Daisy was quite herself and full of eagerness to display its contents. There was her exquisite bridesmaid's gown, a filmy creation that looked too lovely to wear.

"It's enchanting enough for my own wedding gown," she said with a joyous laugh. "And there is my picture hat. I did look just lovely in them. And think what a sight fine dresses cost! There's my beautiful bracelet. Oh, dear! what a joy it must be to be immensely rich! Well, that will come to me, too. Harlan says we must be married in the city in one of the fine churches. He has rather grand ideas."

Helen studied his photograph now and then. There certainly was not any special indication of character or mental strength. Indeed at the first glance she had been disappointed.

"Photographs do not do him justice," Daisy

said half in apology. "He is always talking and laughing, and it is difficult to catch a fine expression of such a person. But he is delightful! I wish you could see him. And he just suits me."

Helen was beginning to weary of the iteration, and of the possession that was really irksome.

"I don't know what I shall do when you are gone," she moaned. "Oh, if you could stay a week longer. Marjorie is full of her own affairs and the church, and I know mamma will be saying little things all the time that will fret me awfully. You must write me lovely long letters to comfort me, at least once a week."

"Oh, Daisy, I couldn't. You know how close one must study, and there are the letters to Hope. All the folks there think I do not write half often enough. You will have your lover's letters, and then he is to come."

"But I want some one all the time. I wish I was rich enough to buy you."

"I'm not poor enough to be sold," laughed Helen.

"And if papa should put off the engagement! Oh, I do want a dear, bosom friend who will sympathize with me."

"Don't borrow trouble," was the resolute reply.

"Helen, you have a real hard side to you and it

seems as if you delighted in turning it to me."

"Nonsense. I am not a sentimental girl."

"But you don't love anyone better than you do me?" she pleaded.

"How many girls in school did you love last year when I was not there? And oh, Daisy Bell, do you love any one in the wide world better than you do me?"

Then Daisy had to laugh at the mock impassioned tone.

But she did like Marjorie very much. How different they were.

Helen was up early Tuesday morning and had her breakfast with the two gentlemen, as she was to go down in the train. So she had only time for a brief good-bye with Daisy, just roused out of a sound sleep. She was truly glad it could be no more. Mrs. Bell said— "We must take up our correspondence again, now each may comfort the other;" and the girl answered with misty eyes and tremulous lips.

She enjoyed the journey down. She felt as if in a fresh atmosphere with the exhaustion swept away; as if she had been in the enervating air of a green-house.

Willard was to take her to her train. And as they stood saying good-bye he exclaimed impetu-

ously: "I wish you girls were allowed to write to a friend of the other sex. Daisy's letters will be full of sentiment that you'll have to answer—"

"But I shall write to your mother," she hurried to answer. She would make no blunder now, though she felt the flush in her cheek.

"I haven't had half a visit. In the summer I shall come to Hope to visit you."

Then he put her on the train.

Helen felt as if she had been away a month. It was a rather lowering day, but as they came into Westchester everything looked beautiful to her, and a thrill of home joy went through her frame. Three or four girls stood on the platform, and the hearty welcome almost brought tears to her eyes.

"Oh, girls," she cried, "I am so glad to get back. What shall we do when we outgrow Aldred House? Will any college walls ever be so dear?"

"Did Daisy return while you were there? We saw a glowing account of Miss Duer's wedding in a New York paper. Why, it was almost like a princess being married, and there was a vague suggestion that Miss Bell had captured the bride's brother, a millionaire and mine owner," and several girls thronged about Helen.

"She is not engaged, at least not quite," and Helen flushed with a kind of consciousness that she might be betraying confidence. "I think her parents do not altogether approve—he is a gay young society man, and they counsel a little waiting."

"The best time to marry is when you have a good chance," said one of the girls sententiously. "And the idea of parents not being willing their daughters should marry a young man and a fortune. An old man in the case would be open to criticism."

"Girls, just think how the pleasant things of life, the little indulgences, always went to Daisy Bell. Some one helped her with translations and difficult problems, she was excused when she had a headache, everybody wanted her to go here and there, and they fetched and carried for her. She was sweet and winsome, and with that rose-pearl complexion and appealing eyes and winsome ways she seemed to go to every one's heart. I went down to her myself."

"Oh, ever so many of us did."

"And after school closed I asked myself seriously what I received in return. She really absorbed your affection with a suggestion that you suited her better than any one else. I wondered

if she didn't give those who were admitted to the sacred precincts just the same fascinating welcome. She was in a way exclusive, but she did like the adoration of the crowd. She promised to write to me, and begged me to be sure and tell her all about the school this year. I wrote her one letter early in vacation and never received any answer.

"I used to wonder if she was a girl for a real and lasting friendship. She was very attractive. Well, since variety is the spice of life, it would make a queer school to have us all dull and learned and solemn, and discriminating—"

"Oh, don't weight our lovely evanescent youth with so many heavy qualities! She was a delicious little body, like a nectarine, and I have heard you cannot eat your cake and have it too. She gave of her brightest, and we couldn't expect winter apple qualities. She's one of the girls born for good luck, so I am not surprised that the millionaire plum fell to her. We have been likened to a garden of girls many a time, and the flowers bloom, shed their sweetness and go their way. So it is with us. Girls have capacious hearts, but not quite like Wordsworth's pedlar."

A general laugh went round. Helen slipped away, eager to rejoin Miss Craven, who seemed

to have a mysteriously softened aspect. She looked motherly, with the two girls clinging to her skirts, and their faces were transfigured with a tender light.

Helen nodded to the group of girls and left them discussing Daisy Bell.

CHAPTER XIII

GIRLS AND GIRLS

JULIET kissed the children and sent them away. She and Helen went to their room.

"You have had a pleasant time, I know. I see it in your eyes," cried Helen. "You have hardly missed me."

"Oh, Helen!" Yet the upbraiding was not very severe, for she smiled.

"I am so glad to get back, oh you don't know! And yet I've had a delightful visit. Mrs. Bell is the sort of woman who takes you to her heart and it keeps warm all the time. And Miss Marjorie is just lovely; I should like to live in her parish went she gets one," laughing. "And the father, brother, lover were all of the most enjoyable sort. Willard has developed into a really ambitious fellow. And Daisy—but we will talk her over afterwards. What has been happening here, and to you?"

"The first thing was sad—well, not altogether. You know there has been no hope for my friend Mrs. Howard's husband this long time. But he

was so anxious to live. However, about two months ago he gave up and just grew weaker until the end came peacefully. That was early in the month. For two weeks she was ill in bed, and just sitting up a few hours when she wrote. As soon as she is well enough to travel she plans to come to Westchester and stay awhile. I am to find her a boarding place. I think she cares a great deal about me. I was touched by some of the things she said. And she wishes so much that she had a daughter. I am beginning to think girls fill quite a useful place in the economy of life.

There was a shadowy smile in Helen's eyes.

"You see this was not like anything sudden. She has been devoted, and she feels now that her work has met every requirement. If her youngest son only was a girl! But he is out on the Oregon coast, full of adventures. One son is married and settled in San Francisco. The other one has gone abroad for his firm. So she is quite alone."

Would she want Juliet? Helen wondered.

"And we have had quite a romance here in school. People sometimes say stories are so unreal. You have had some queer episodes in your life, and think of me who am lord of my fortune

and little else besides—a miserable paraphrase, isn't it? But do you know I've often thought my advent in school was something like Miss Kent's—"

"But you are not alike?" protested Helen.

"Nearer than you think. A school is like a book. You are turning new pages every day and there are new developments. I wonder how many girls' stories Mrs. Aldred holds in her heart? The very day you went away Miss Kent had word that her mother was dead. Miss Logan told us the story to explain something about her friend. Mr. Kent left considerable property tied up in this way. Wife and daughter were to share the income just alike, the trustee was to pay the daughter her share. She went to a boarding school one year and on her return found her mother so much in debt that she took a small district school and taught and studied with the old clergyman of the place. Mrs. Kent was extravagantly fond of dress, and not pleased that she did not have the disposition of the whole income. The principal could not be touched; if the mother died first it went to the daughter and if otherwise to her mother. Last June Mrs. Kent married an Englishman and went abroad. Miss Kent paid up some debts and found her income

would admit of her coming here, where her only friend, Miss Logan, had arranged to take a course. And the new Mrs. Burwind had a stroke of apoplexy about the middle of the month and lived only a few hours. The trustee came up with the letter, and it seems the husband thinks he ought to have his wife's share, but of course he cannot get it. So you see Miss Kent is quite an heiress. They both plan to go to college together. The income is about a thousand a year."

"So romances haven't gone out of date," commented Helen. "And here is a mother who disproves the tenderness we associate with motherhood." A vague thought of her own mother came to Helen and she wondered if she would have loved her as she grew older.

"Miss Logan was really very sweet and friendly and delicate in talking of her friend who had been always ambitious on educational lines. She had pinched and gone in the plainest attire, indeed she had almost come to despise dress because her mother used every art to obtain it. The trustee, Mr. Carter, had to warn several shop-keepers not to trust her. And the mother used to say—'Just wait until I come into possession of this money, I'll make it fly,' as if she was sure she

would outlive Elizabeth. Miss Logan admitted that she had had a very hard life. And she spent the little money she had been saving up for a year to study higher branches, on her mother's wedding trousseau. Mr. Carter would not advance a dollar, and I think he was right. Then her mother said she went to England looking like some one's servant girl."

"It's queer," remarked Helen thoughtfully, "that so many of the girls eager for education have such a struggle to compass it. And they do not get honored for their efforts. I think a boy would. It isn't fair!" and she glanced up indignantly as she ended her sentence.

"I wish there might be a little more kindness among girls. I am sure there is with boys and men. But the girls study each other's clothes and rate a girl accordingly, though they really did not pay much attention to mine. But I was diffident and awkward. I still half envy girls who walk right into one's heart like Daisy Bell."

"Miss Kent might have been a little more approachable," said Helen. "I tried. And—she might have made herself look a little more girlish, a little prettier. I think you ought to look as well as you can, and your mother and aunts ought to allow you to. I don't believe vanity is a bit

worse than the dissatisfaction of faded and outgrown frocks children are made to wear. Your clothes ought to be so you would not give them a second thought."

"You might not, perhaps. Mrs. Kent would give them many thoughts. Anything inharmonious does fret some people."

"I don't know but gowns and caps and 'round tires like the moon' and 'wimples and crimping pins' ought to be made a subject of special study," laughed Helen. "Well, I shall renew my efforts toward Miss Kent. She must have had a hard, unhappy life, and think how delightfully they might have spent it together! Oh, why must people throw away not only their own chances but those of other folks they have no right to! Why, that is taking what doesn't belong to you."

"I never thought of that before. It has a wide aspect. It is not just to defraud another of happiness."

"And what else has happened at this wonderful Aldred House where stories of life are being made all the time?"

"Two new scholars came yesterday, girls about sixteen. One is an orphan and will stay three years, her guardian plans; a rather aggressive looking girl. The other cried nearly all night

from homesickness, so she had a home to leave. The fair was a success, the Christmas celebration delightful. Oh, and Mrs. Danforth told me Gordon had sent her a check for fifty dollars to buy Christmas for the rest of the parson's flock."

"That was splendid," cried Helen, aflush with delight. She wondered why she should be so proud to have him remember.

"It is curious," Juliet said after a pause, "but these few days I have felt like being in a real home. There was time for interest in so many things. One really forgot the school part. Oh, and you have not had your letters. How could I be so remiss!"

Uncle Jason had sent her five dollars with his dear love. He knew she did not need it, but it was all the dearer for that. Nat had written a long letter. His violet bed was coming on splendidly, and his young fruit trees were standing the cold robustly. The hens were bringing in money every week. There was so much interest in farming. She had sent him a book of travels and he was delighted with it.

Mrs. Wilmarth had remembered both girls, but Helen's letter was especially dear. She was learning to be of some use in the world, to minister to others as well as to be ministered to. Mrs.

Gilbert had proved such a help. Mr. and Mrs. Walters had taken her up warmly. "We are making a very little new social atmosphere. Once a week the girls come, there are twelve now, and we are reading up Holland. Miss Westerly asked if Mrs. Gilbert would not come to the library some evening and give a talk; she has an excellent, clear voice. Miss Westerly said she would find the audience. Other places were having clubs and lectures, and it seems as if we might find something better to talk about than the foolish little tattle of very common life. I feel that I dropped down alarmingly. Hope was so slow and dull, but isn't it every one's fault that a place is dull? The girls finish at the high school and then fall back into nonentities. I don't wonder Mr. Warfield is discouraged. Do not laugh at our small efforts, you wise girls, with the learning of the ages all about you. But I am starved for some really fine music."

"The world *does* move," Helen declared with gay insistence. "And Mrs. Gilbert must be a genius."

When they went down to dinner Helen gave a furtive glance to the end of the table. Miss Kent was grave as usual, but she had a bit of white lisse at her throat and wrists, and her hair was

not drawn quite so tightly from her face. Helen pitied her heartily for that sad and discouraging girlhood, that had shed around her the atmosphere of settled distrust of everybody, that had made a mock of what should have been the tenderest love of life. Could one really sorrow for the dead?

"I want to live the kind of life that will make people regret me when I am gone," Helen said decisively to herself.

The young ladies were to have a little gathering in the parlor, just a sort of informal affair where each might bring a quotation or a poem, or a thought that had impressed her.

The school-room was to be given over to the younger children and a number of the day scholars were invited. Miss Grace came to Helen.

"I was going to entertain them with Miss Hyde's help with plays and games, but I have to go down in town for an hour. You are so good at these things, will you take my place?"

Helen wanted to be with her own class, but she replied with a gay little nod and said she would do her best.

"I begged Miss Grace to ask you," began Miss Hyde. "In between times I want to hear about

Daisy Bell. *Do* you think she will marry that rich fellow?"

"She can if she will. It is in her hands. That is, if her parents agree."

"If they didn't I would run away. I suppose it was her pretty face and her winsome voice. What luck some girls do have! And I dare say she's proud enough of her conquest. Why, you were quite honored by the invitation to visit her! Will you be bridesmaid?"

"Nonsense!" cried Helen sharply.

"I hadn't thought you were such great friends," with a touch of satire.

"I'd been there before, and I went a good deal to see Mr. and Mrs. Bell. Daisy was away."

"Oh! to be sure."

"Come, let us begin with the children."

Miss Hyde knew no end of entertaining things and she soon had the children interested. Helen was just getting over her dissatisfaction when Miss Craven came in. Elma Gartney ran to her and clasped her small arms about her dear friend's waist, crying: "Oh, have you come to stay with us?"

Juliet stooped and kissed her.

"They want you in there, Helen," she said smilingly. "I'm not quick at such matters and

you know so many bright quotations and retorts. And I am fond of the children. It doesn't need so much wit here."

"Why, I think it does," Miss Hyde protested.

Juliet was not aggrieved. "I fancy it needs readiness and fertility, and the desire to be a child with them. I have to put my childhood in as I go along for I really did not have any and hunger for it."

"You are too generous, Juliet," and Helen felt a prick of disapproval for her own unwillingness.

"No, just generous enough to myself to take what I like best, to give you what you will enjoy the most. There, run along."

Helen went thoughtfully. Juliet was changing in many respects. Was it maturity of character? She was more attractive, she had developed a peculiar sweetness and care for others.

Helen entered into the recreation with great zest. It was truly a sharpener of wits.

New Year's Day was quite a gala time. Most of the girls had come, for school began the next morning. They visited each other's rooms, they displayed gifts and shared sweets, made plans and expressed hopes. Some were glad this was the last year. The college candidates discussed

various institutions and various professions, and the less intellectual ones, lovers, marriage and a home of one's very own. And the good times that always have a glamour for youth.

Then study began in real earnest. One may fritter away time in the early part of the term, but there must be no lagging in the new year. Helen was very much in earnest. Broader views were opening before her. There was the fascinating ideal of influence, of standing strongly for the right, the truth, the helpfulness, for then one believes strongly that his or her work tends to uplift the world. It is the girl with no ideals who is content to drift, and who sinks into the inefficient woman later on.

Helen could not rid herself of a feeling that Daisy Bell was something of a burden. It was mean and selfish to be bored with these letters of reiteration, and the "Tell me how you would feel, tell me what you would do?" when she could not imagine herself in any such position.

"I don't believe I shall ever fall in love," she said to herself a little ruefully, for every young girl hates to admit such an incapability. "I'm cold, somehow. These tremendous emotions seem like a river rushing on and on and emptying itself into the sea—for what? Does the sea care?

No, that's faulty. The other party *may* care. But friends do not, I am afraid. And I believed I could be a splendid friend, too."

Then the lover came and besought his way into an engagement, and Daisy was wildly happy. There were only two pages about this, and Mrs. Newell had sent her an invitation to spend a week with them in the city.

Helen began to like Miss Logan very much. She was a sensible, commonplace girl, with enough money for her needs and an admiration for a college education with a purpose in a woman's life.

"For we don't all marry," she said rather humorously. "There may be men enough to go around but when other girls have sifted out the best, you don't want to take the incapables. One is not compelled to marry for the respectability of the thing in this new century. And we can even have homes—"

"It's not very beguiling to think of living alone by one's self," interrupted some one.

"You don't need to live alone," insisted Miss Logan. "I never could see why two women could not join hands and hearts and interests in each other, when their wishes are similar, and have a pleasant home. I don't like solitude myself."

"But women never *can* agree," suggested another girl in a rather dogmatic tone.

"Can't they? I haven't heard Miss Craven and Miss Grant quarrel much, and I'll say just here, they are about as unlike as the average man and wife. There's a French story about two married lovers who insisted upon giving up to each other out of the abundance of their love, and they carried it so far that they really fell into disputes and finally upbraided each other, and when the wedding journey was finished, the bride went home to her mother convinced that she could never agree with such a brute of a husband. So you see virtue may be overdone. If you have a will of your own you can give in occasionally, but if you have no will, alas for you! You are as limp as a wet towel."

"Then, women do not have sufficient income to keep house," objected another. "And you seldom see very rich women set about it."

"Why couldn't a born housekeeper, and I have seen such among women, make a home for two or three women, who have to toil at something? It would be no more expensive than boarding and much more comfortable. Think of the nice talks around the table about books, and a picture seen in some one's window, and even your

employer. Now I fancy he would be a more interesting subject than the average servant. And after you had dished him up in various fashions gathered from your experience of him, you could give thanks that he did not belong to you."

"But suppose he was every way admirable? Then you would envy the other woman who had him."

"And you would know if there were three or four around the table that you couldn't *all* have him. That would be the safety valve. I think we should be likely to choose some woman who was companionable to us, and if it was not a success we could separate. There would be no divorce expenses."

There was a general laugh at that.

"Do you mean to try it, Miss Logan?" one girl asked with a sort of bravado.

"Well," rather deliberately, "we planned it two years ago. I kept house for a queer old aunt, deaf as a post and in her dotage. Kate taught the district school and boarded with me. My real genius lies along housekeeping lines. This was a great aunt, ninety-four when she died, and I was named for her. No one wanted to live with her, that is, none of the relatives, so I

went when I was fifteen. The money and the old house was left to me. Miss Kent's mother married. So we were free to begin our career. I don't care so very much personally for a college degree, but I am going to keep Kate in order and develop her on womanly lines, while the college does the rest. You see we have both been a good deal in the shade and now we are going to get some of the sunshine of life."

"You deserve it," Miss Craven rejoined with earnest emphasis.

"Isn't it odd," Helen said when they were in their own room, "that almost every life has a romance that you cannot even suspect at the first glance. I like Celia Logan for her heartiness and her love for her friend and her earnest endeavor for her. And she doesn't look a bit heroic. She suggested to me at first some of the girls at Hope who marry common men, and go the little round, and whose highest ambition is to own a parlor suite. Some of them would have filled the air with lamentations if they had to take care of a queer, childish old body. I know she must have been real good to her, so for once virtue didn't have to be its own reward," appended Helen gaily. "And the refreshing manner in which she calls her Kate! Katherine

Rowena Kent. There's style for you. But I'm glad her name isn't Melissa or Joanna, it will look so much better on the register. And it makes your heart ache to think of that selfish mother running in debt everywhere for finery! Oh, I don't wonder she went to the other extreme."

"I liked the thought of their living together," Juliet declared. "I wish women did like each other better. Where are the virtues and graces men see in them?"

"Some of them hold off so."

"They wouldn't if the others were cordial. And none of us were very cordial to these two girls, newcomers, too. I should like to have the gift of making friends easily. Yet I would rather be faithful. I should hate to be liked and then thrust aside for a newer fancy."

"I suppose most of girls' fancies are evanescent," Helen returned thoughtfully, "because we haven't the judgment or the experience to discern the finer qualities. And sometimes you like people—well just because you do like them."

"And because they come to you when you are a stranger in a strange land. The outgiving is so delightful. Yet I have wondered in the case of these two girls if we could have discerned their

heroism so plainly if they had been really poor? You see Miss Kent has a thousand a year, a very fair income for a girl, and I dare say Miss Logan is quite as well placed."

"And you are going to love me, after all my poor little pittance is spent, and I have nothing left but a college degree."

Helen clasped her arm about Juliet's neck.

"Oh, you must always believe that," and the voice was freighted with truthful fervor.

CHAPTER XIV

MYSTERIOUS POSSIBILITIES

THERE had been very little snow until in February, and then it began after a dismal gray day and snowed all night and all the next day, at first a damp windless storm that enveloped the trees with snowy bloom of all nameless kinds, long sprays like spirea, great clusters of roses, drooping bells, everything one could imagine. Then the air grew dryer, colder and every branch sparkled with innumerable gems. The streets were shining white ways that might lead to the City not made with hands. Houses were hooded, evergreens were pyramids of white. And when night began to drop down there was still a mystic light over all.

The next morning at sunrise it was magnificent. The bluest of skies against which the hills in the distance were outlined as if the world was bounded just there. And then came all manner of merry sounds from men armed with shovels and brooms, pausing in their work to snowball

each other, boys shouting and laughing, and even the girls went out for a frolic. Then the sleighs began with their bells in various musical keys.

On the second day in the afternoon a sleigh stopped at Aldred House. Elma Gartney, who had been standing by a window, ran down with a glad shout.

"It is papa," she cried through the hall. "Papa!"

"Well, little chicken," he said, "where is your mate? And I've come to see if you would like a sleigh ride. Will I have to coax Mrs. Aldred very hard?" and he kissed the child a dozen times.

Elma was snuggled against his fur coat. Mrs. Aldred came to welcome him while the maid went to find Wilma.

"I wanted to see the children and give them a treat," he exclaimed. "That is—if they have been good," with a sort of mischievous smile.

"I could hardly deny them this pleasure," Mrs. Aldred rejoined. "But they are doing very well indeed. You may be justly proud of them."

Mr. Gartney looked gratified as he encircled both girls. "And I am hardly able to express all my obligation to you," he answered with deep feeling. "It is not every school that has such

a delightful home aspect as this. I have always rather deprecated sending young children away among strange associates, but they are so happy here, and the influence is in every way admirable."

His eyes were raised with a grateful light.

"And now another favor. My sleigh is large and we can take in two more if Mrs. Aldred will consent. May the children have their choice?"

"Oh, Miss Craven!" they both exclaimed in a breath. "And—and—Miss Hyde," added Wilma.

"No, Miss Grant. I like Miss Helen best. She never laughs at you"—with childish frankness and eager eyes.

"It had better be Miss Grant, I think," said Mrs. Aldred.

Miss Wiley carried the invitation.

"Why, that is just glorious!" declared Helen. "I was thinking of proposing a regular party. Winter has not been very bountiful of her white mantle and ermine furs."

Mr. Gartney was preferring another request, that he might keep the party to dinner at the hotel and a little while in the evening. He had to leave in the first train the next morning.

She gave her assent. The party trooped down presently, bundled up warm, for the air was crisply cold. Helen expressed her enthusiastic delight. They were handed in, the young ladies on the back seat, and the children with their father, who tucked the fur robe tightly about them.

"I am afraid you will be crowded, driving," Juliet suggested. "Had we not better take one of the children?"

"I want to sit by papa awhile," Elma said, "and then I'm coming by you, dear Miss Juliet."

Mr. Gartney smiled and nodded.

"What a pity that man has a wife!" said one of the girls watching the party from the upper window. "Which one would he take?" and she turned to her companion.

"If the children chose it would be Miss Craven. *I* should choose Helen Grant. It's curious—those children have never been home since they came here. They adore their father but they rarely mention their step-mother. And any one can see he is extravagantly fond of them. Every week they get a letter."

"Miss Craven is a rather curious girl. With all that money I'd be somebody. And I wouldn't

spend any four years in a college. I'd have a good time, a grand good time!"

Juliet thought she was having a good time. The roads were well broken and they skimmed along like flying. Here and there in a sheltered nook some tree had not shaken off its fleecy covering. House roofs were white, and from some chimneys curled soft dun smoke wreaths. But the country seemed so wonderfully still. Occasionally a cow lowed, or a chanticler sent forth his clarion notes. Then the soft laughs of the children as the father said some amusing thing, made Helen smile.

They paused at a country hotel, presently, where two or three lumbering sleds stood with horses in winter furs, Helen said, they were so shaggy. Could they have a cup of tea and some hot milk for the little girls?

They were ushered through to the best room. A soft, thick rag carpet covered the floor, there were two cushioned Boston rockers, one on each side of the stove, and some rush-bottomed ones, ranged around. The adornments were colored engravings of Presidents and their families and the mantel-piece was a receptacle for odd miscellany.

"It suggests remembered places in Hope," remarked Helen mirthfully.

"Hope! That ought to be a lovely town, a place of rest and refreshment," Mr. Gartney commented.

"Towns, like people, often get misnamed," returned Helen. "I have seen few places as beautiful as Westchester. But then I have not traveled much."

"I have been about a great deal and can truly endorse your sentiment," was the rejoinder.

The tea and the milk came in, and a plate of hot ginger bread just out of the oven. Mr. Gartney made a wry face over the tea, but the cake was excellent. Helen decided she would have some milk.

"It will be colder going home," Mr. Gartney said. "The sun will be nearly down. You must get good and warm."

The ride was as fine on the return, though they were going away from the sun, which was slipping behind the ridge of hills. The horses had expended their first vigor, so the points of beauty did not whirl by quite so rapidly. Elma had settled between Helen and Juliet at her earnest desire, though her father was afraid the guests would be crowded.

"I wish you would sing," and Wilma turned her head. "Papa, Miss Grant sings so sweetly, like a bird. Can't you, dear Miss Grant?"

"But what if the sound should freeze?"

"Oh, that would be funny. Frozen music. And when it thawed would it be like an echo?"

"Miss Craven sings, too," said Wilma a little jealously.

Mr. Gartney joined the entreaty. Helen smiled, thinking of another drive in Hope and a song. She was impelled to try the Bugle song again and it was beautiful on the clear air with the soft echoes of Juliet's voice.

"That was a most delightful treat," declared Mr. Gartney. "It really seemed to come from Elfland."

Then they must sing again, but presently Helen said she must put her muff up to her face to thaw it out. They were coming to civilization too, and the horses suddenly spurred up, anxious to get home.

This parlor was delightfully warm, and the dinner most gratifying to hungry people. Afterward they had a charming talk in the corner of the room, but Elma went to sleep in Miss Craven's arms.

"I must thank you very warmly for all this

pleasure," Mr. Gartney said with deep feeling. "The children would not have had as happy a time without you. And, Miss Craven, you will never quite know how grateful I am for all your kindness to these two children so dear to me. I think of it daily and thank God for their pleasant home." Then lowering his tone he added—"Sometime you may know what no doubt seems a little strange to you now."

Juliet colored. She felt the mystery, but had no desire to penetrate it.

Then they were taken home and the sleepy little girls hardly felt the pang of parting as their father kissed them fondly, and thanked Mrs. Aldred most cordially for her indulgence.

Helen and Juliet went at once to their room. Several letters lay on Helen's table, and by the time she was through Juliet was prepared for bed, so they wished each other a simple good-night. Helen's brain was awlirl with vague thoughts and wonders, and Daisy Bell's letter had no part in them.

For a fortnight Westchester kept carnival, there being an addition to the snow, then a few lowering, warm, and drizzling days swept away the splendor, and prefigured coming spring. Oh, how fast the days flew to the ambitious ones, how

they lagged to the indifferent, and the two engaged girls counted them wearily.

"There ought never an engaged girl be admitted to the graduating class," said Celia Logan emphatically. "I do hope there will not be engaged girls in college. What earthly good is this term going to do Miss Henderson and Miss Waite? They have gone past graduation dresses and come to wedding gowns and bridesmaids and journeys and they bore you to death asking what you think the prettiest and what will be the most becoming. In the end a stylish dressmaker will do what she thinks proper. Why must every one in the world ask so much advice without the slightest idea of following it?"

"That puzzles me a good deal. Do you suppose it is only girls who do it?" asked Helen.

"Oh, no! Women of age and experience used to come to me, who had neither. It's a vicious habit and you wear out no end of brain cells—if the physiological theory is true, trying to elucidate other people's affairs. Why I've had a neighbor come over with a bit of calico and discuss the best way of making her girl's frock sleeves, whether they would wear better on the bias or the straight? On the bias she would have to piece them. And didn't I think the

stripes ought to match? Now I never had any girls to make frocks for, and I make my own sleeves according to my cloth, an excellent old adage that I think must have come down from Lot's wife before she became statuary."

Helen laughed heartily. "It is a want of self-reliance," she answered.

"Or a love of gossip. But I will not drop into that, and spend your precious time. I want a little help in this translation. I'm not a bit poetical, and I haven't much imagination. And you do these things in such a splendid manner."

That was due to her father, and she was glad she had some excellencies to thank him for. Perhaps too, Mr. Walters had helped.

They went over it studiously, and at last it was satisfactory.

"Thank you a thousand times. If I could do anything in return I would. Why do you smile?"

"Did I smile?" asked Helen in a cordial tone that would have neutralized any hurt if there had been one. "I was wondering why you were going to college, and what you meant to do with the training? You are very ambitious. You must have a purpose."

"Because Kate is going. She has some plans

about the right training of women which she means to exploit. You see she has suffered a great deal from the no-training belief. You try to shape a boy into being useful; it has been a theory that all these things come natural to the girl, and that she can take them up when she comes to them. I couldn't do very much for her in the past years but comfort her in the deep waters of affliction. Now I am going to try to re-model her. She has many fine and strong qualities. She has been enduring subterfuges all her life, now she is where she means to make war upon them. She is the personification of truth and honesty, but I do not see why the scrubby untrained rose should be set against the perfected one. It's very nice for it to bloom along the wayside, and the common people who are supposed to be grateful for a bit of beauty tread it underfoot. But it is no sweeter than the other that holds up its head in royal bravery. You really disparage truth when you do not make it attractive. It is a grand and noble thing and should not have an ugly face put upon it. Ugliness is not strength. So I am going along to keep her from aceticism, to make her believe in beauty and sweetness and light. Incidentally

I shall learn something. There is accurate thinking, there is a sifting out of the non-essential, and the proper training of the will, which is a sort of heart discipline as well. Then the true use of the æsthetic faculties, the distinction between vanity and self-appreciation. Meanwhile I shall mend her clothes and introduce some innovation that will improve her personal appearance. Perhaps mine as well."

The eyes were full of a sort of joyous merriment, the mouth was smiling and expressive. There was a dimple in the cheek on the slightest movement, and a cleft in the rather square chin, an expression of intelligence and half-suppressed mirth.

"You love Miss Kent very much," Helen said.

"Yes. Hard lines made us sisters. Blood doesn't always count in heart relationship. You see I wasn't sure whether I'd get more than a 'thank you,' for my years of service, and of course she couldn't pray for hers to end. But we meant to keep together. Why can't two women love as well as a man and a woman? They may not be the strict complement of each other. And suddenly everything changed, yet the old regard showed no flaws. But then you and Miss Craven

know all about friendship. She is very rich, we are only moderate. I like economy. I even don't mind a little pinch. I have some idea of becoming a writer on household economics. Oh, what was that!"

They both ran into the hall. Something lay in a little heap on the floor. Miss Grace Aldred was coming from the opposite direction.

"Oh, it's one of the twins, and she has been knocked senseless. I suppose she came down head first. She was singing a second ago."

They tried to revive her but in vain.

"She must be taken up in the Infirmary and the doctor summoned. She may have some broken bones. Oh, Miss Logan—"

Miss Logan had picked up the limp child and was mounting the stairs. The waxen hands hung over her shoulder, but the face was hidden in her neck. She carried her to the room where there were three white cots, none of them occupied now. A group of girls followed, and as she laid her down peered forward.

"Her arms are not broken," said Miss Logan, trying them. "Wouldn't it be as well to undress her? She's unconscious—"

"The doctor has been summoned. Girls, you

may be dismissed. Miss Logan, you are like a trained nurse."

"I have had a good deal of experience in this line," she replied.

Nurse Mary came. They tried restoratives again, they examined every limb, but could discover no further injury. The child lay unconscious, only there was a faint pulsation of the heart.

Helen looked about for Miss Craven. She was in the schoolroom, telling the younger children stories from mythology, dressed in her own softened imaginings. Helen sat and listened.

"Why doesn't Elma come back?" her sister queried presently.

"Now you must go out in the court and have a good run," Miss Craven said when the stories were finished. The court was enclosed, and the weather without was gloomy and drizzling.

"I must go and find Elma," and Wilma lingered in an indecisive manner.

"She is engaged just now with Mrs. Aldred," Helen said quietly. "Have a merry time, all of you, and a good run."

"Then I'll go with you, Miss Craven," and the child clasped her arm, swinging it to and fro, and glancing up appealingly.

"Can't I have Miss Craven a little while?" pleaded Helen.

Wilma turned reluctantly. The two girls passed through the corridor and upstairs to their own room where Helen related the mishap.

"My darling Elma!" exclaimed Juliet turning pale. "Oh, let us go to her."

Nearly an hour elapsed before the doctor arrived. He made a very thorough examination and looked grave.

"She has struck on her head, but what the injury is, except concussion, I cannot now decide. She may lie this way for hours. I will be in again at bedtime."

The gravity of the case was not explained. Wilma begged pathetically to see her sister, but Miss Craven devoted herself to the child until it was bedtime. Then she made a protest about sleeping alone, but Juliet read her to sleep.

In vain were all the doctor's efforts to restore consciousness, though he remained a long while. And the next morning there was no change.

"An operation may be necessary," he remarked in a softened tone, glancing up inquiringly.

"Then we must send for her father," said Mrs. Aldred, her voice full of anxiety.

"Yes, send at once," was his reply.

Mr. Gartney was away from home, and did not get the message until late at night. So another day of suspense passed.

Yet there seemed faint indications of a return to consciousness in a slight movement of the brow as if from pain. The doctor worked assiduously. Mr. Gartney's anxiety was almost heartbreaking, yet he could not consent to bring himself to an operation. There was a faint flutter of the pulse, but her heartbeats seemed to be slower.

"I am afraid it must be done," said the doctor. "There is such a thing as waiting too long."

But while they were watching, the eyes that had been half-closed opened wide, yet seemed to note nothing. Presently a quiver passed over the pale lips. The doctor administered a powerful stimulant. The child glanced around. Then a faint cry escaped her. The nurse bent over.

"I want my Miss Craven," and then she lapsed into unconsciousness again.

"Send for Miss Craven," requested the doctor.

Juliet came quietly into the room. The father's eyes met hers imploringly and prayed her to save his child. The doctor brought her a chair. She took both of Elma's cold hands in hers and

watched the marble face so like death. But moment after moment passed and there was no stir.

"We can wait until to-morrow," remarked the doctor. "Miss Craven, will you remain? If you are here you may catch some waking impression. It seems a critical time."

Mr. Gartney's eyes were raised again, and Juliet could almost feel the breathlessness.

"Yes," she answered with a gentle firmness.

All the house grew still. The nurse, the father and Juliet watched. The big clock in the hall tolled its half-hours off solemnly. The doctor threw himself on a couch. No one spoke, and the silence seemed awesome. Juliet felt the hands grow warmer, was the pulse stronger too? She hardly dared trust it.

Twelve. One. Nurse was dozing. Then Elma stirred again, turned her eyes to Juliet with a frightened expression.

"Oh, don't let me fall," she cried in a faint voice. "Don't let me fall," and she started as if she would rise, but Juliet's arms were around her. "I love you so! I love you so," she murmured.

The doctor and nurse were on their feet. Yes, her pulse was stronger, the heart more assured.

And now it seemed like sleep rather than unconsciousness. The doctor roused her presently, and gave her a stimulant, and so they watched until morning.

"I hardly dare give you hope," he said, "yet it seems possible. Miss Craven, do not leave her, you certainly have a curious influence. Let her wake when she will, and be ready to answer at the moment, for intelligence is very fleeting. Nurse, administer some nourishment now and then. I will be in again at noon. My other patients will berate me for neglect."

Nurse asked Miss Craven to go to breakfast, but she shook her head.

"Then I must bring some."

"But you go," Juliet said to Mr. Gartney.

The accident had passed its crisis; that was clearly evident by noon, though the child had recognized no one but Miss Craven. Still the improvement went on.

"You have saved my child," Mr. Gartney said in a broken voice. "Her life ought to be devoted to you."

"Oh, no, no! There are nearer and dearer ones," in a touching protest. But afterward she was to understand what it meant.

Another day and the improvement was cer-

tain. Her head ached and she was very weak, but Wilma was allowed in to see her, and her father had to go home. How delightful these few days had been, all her life they were a sweet remembrance.

Mr. Gartney had a long talk with Mrs. Aldred before he went away. He would much rather the child would remain here through her convalescence, since there was no one to give her the care she needed except strangers.

"If it was vacation time I should like to send them both away under Miss Craven's care. She should be the real mother of the children, but I never saw any one assume motherhood so successfully."

Juliet thought he showed his vigil perceptibly. His eyes were heavy and they contracted now and then with pain, and his complexion had a peculiar pallor.

"Some day I shall make an explanation to you," he remarked with his farewell. "It may seem strange, loving these children as I do, I should be willing to spare them out of my life, but it is best."

Elma recovered slowly. There were to be no lessons for some time to come. The weather was growing pleasant and nurse had her out of

doors a good deal. Then she had some special indulgences, but she never took advantage of them. She delighted to come to Miss Craven's room, and if the girls were engrossed she would sit on the foot of the bed among cushions and look over pictures, or do a little crocheting in a languid manner.

It had been quite an episode for the school and made rather a depressing influence at first. Helen missed her friend in the studies and now it appeared as if Juliet had really lost interest. She seemed abstracted, often curiously lost in a reverie. And letters seemed pouring in upon her. She answered them and made no comment. What was happening? Helen was too proud to inquire. Then a strange fear shivered over her. Had Mr. Gartney's influence anything to do with it? She had admired him very much, there had been those sympathetic days when Elma was hovering between life and death. What if Juliet had fallen a victim to some evil fascination!

"You seem to have lost interest in your studies of late," Helen began one afternoon when Juliet said she had letters to write. "You surely never can give up graduating?"

"Oh, no, no!" But her tone had a vague sound.

"But you have fallen behind. And you seem so—so indifferent." Helen's tone was very emphatic.

"Would you be very much disappointed if I did not go to college?" she asked gravely.

"Disappointed! And when we have settled all our plans! And you have—" a sudden indignation flashed over Helen. Was she to be set aside for some whim! This friendship had grown so steadily, so surely, and was it to fail at this important epoch?

"Oh, Helen!" Juliet cried beseechingly. "Don't look so resentful. I did not think you would care so much. And until the matter was settled—"

The maid tapped at the door. "Letters," she said, "and an express package for Miss Craven."

Helen took hers. One was from Daisy and she opened it indifferently, but in a moment or two was lost in its contents. For Daisy had won her point at last. Mr. Duer was going to California on business and had petitioned so urgently for a marriage that it was to take place at once and to be a very quiet affair, just a church wedding in a traveling gown and an immediate start

on the journey. And this was why no outside friends would be asked, but she should carry everybody in her heart and love them always.

CHAPTER XV

THREADS CROSSED AND TANGLED

It seemed heartless to Helen, selfish to the last degree, not even to wait for Marjorie's marriage, which was to be at Easter, only about a fortnight later. She knew the mother's heart would ache. Ah, what was love worth?

"Daisy Bell is to be married—why, Thursday, to-morrow. And she had counted on such a grand wedding, but it is to be very quiet and she doesn't even wait for Marjorie. If the Newells had been in New York they would have had it there in some church and a reception. But Mr. Duer had to go to California. Well, the agony is over and no doubt she is happy. All the perplexing questions are set at rest. And here is a lovely epistle from Mrs. Wilmarth. You must read that."

"I wonder if there will be time enough before dinner to tell you part of my story."

"Well—there is about twenty minutes," but Helen's voice was not very encouraging.

"It is about Mrs. Howard. She has been in no end of trouble."

"Oh!" Helen ejaculated. "There seems a good deal of trouble one way and another." Then she remembered she had not had any special difficulties and life had flowed smoothly. It seemed ungracious not to take an interest in Juliet's other friend.

"You see they have spent a good deal of money these last two years traveling about and having medical advice. And as she was alone the married son insisted that she should sell her house and come out to live with him. It is a delightful home up the Hudson, one of those beautiful residential towns where the grounds are like little parks. It enchanted me the summer I was there. It seemed like Paradise, and it has always haunted me as the kind of home I would like to have. At first she thought she could not part with it. But she found she would not have sufficient means to keep it up, and she could not live there alone, so she had better let it go. But she could not think of going out to her son, I do not believe she fancies the wife very much. And she wondered if she could not, when we had settled upon our college, come and live in our vicinity where she could see us fre-

quently. It is strange how many people are left solitary from various causes. Then a thought flashed into my mind. I'm not sure but it started from Miss Logan's plan of herself and her friend living together. I want a home. It grows upon me all the time. That is a woman's dream after all. So I proposed to buy the house. Mr. Davis is investing my surplus income in this and that, and why not in a house? Then that is so delightful. A splendidly large parlor with a beautiful porch in front of it; a library, sitting room, dining room and a pretty little den. It isn't so fine—I can't just describe it—homelike is the word. Of course Mr. Davis objected and made all manner of excuses. You know I've been of age for some time. So I just empowered Mrs. Howard's lawyer to open negotiations. I was dreadfully afraid I wouldn't succeed, but now I have. When the papers are made out I shall have a delightful, restful home, and you are to come to it whenever you can. And as I can't live there alone and a young woman needs a chaperon I am to have Mrs. Howard. You would like her so much."

"And you've given up college!" Helen could not conceal her disappointment. She was almost angry.

"My dear Helen, I have wanted to talk of this for some time but so many things have intervened. And if I couldn't have had the house and Mrs. Howard—when you were away at Christmas I discussed the matter with Mrs. Aldred, and we went over it quite thoroughly. You know she does not recommend that *all* girls should go to college. She thinks the woman who is capable of making a home is quite as indispensable as her learned sister. And I have no special ambition. I do not desire a profession, I do not care to teach. There are hundreds of women who must do these things, why should I crowd in? And I am convinced that my ideal is a beautiful and happy home, open to those I like best and to those who need the rest and refreshment. It came to me vaguely on that first visit to Mrs. Wilmarth. There was an air quite different from the other houses. It was partly money, though there was not any decided extravagance, it was largely taste and tact and discrimination, and above all a real love for home in spite of ill health and suffering. You saw it again with the Travis family. And there are lovely homes here in town. Why shouldn't the making of a good home be considered a good work?"

Helen watched her friend with mingled emotions. The first was a sense of loss amounting almost to personal injury. Had she not taken her up when other girls stood aloof, had she not used her best efforts to combat the timidity that often betrayed Juliet into awkwardness? She *had* inspired her with courage, she had stood her friend, to a certain extent directed her ambition. And they had been very dear friends. While Helen was too proud, too sturdily honest to accept benefits that she could provide for herself even in a lesser degree, she had somehow relied on the friendship. How many girls were capable of it? She did not at that moment consider the immaturity of youth and the many side issues that tended to its development, the outgrowing of girlish ideals just as the blossom pushes out of the sheath no longer needed for its sustenance.

"Yes, I am disappointed," she returned proudly. Then as the dinner bell sounded she turned to the mirror, pulled out the ends of her fluffy necktie, ruffled up her hair a trifle, and as two or three of the girls were passing smiled and nodded to them, and with Juliet joined the group that wended their way gayly down the wide stair case, chatting.

Juliet was at the head of the table. Helen watched her with furtive glances. There was a quiet grace and dignity, and it seemed to her she had never seen just this aspect of self-reliance before, of ease and yes, attractiveness. She would never enter the lists of handsome women, but how few were really handsome! She held her head at a fine poise, she glanced fearlessly out of eyes that had lost their uncertain expression, her lips had settled in lines that suggested a smile. And suddenly Helen realized that her friend had passed the boundary line of crude girlhood. These years at school and with the companionship of trained girls and women had developed her into early womanhood. Helen had to admit vaguely and almost resentfully that it had not been all her influence or protection. She had been the leading spirit but she would be so no longer.

It went to her heart like a stab. "Of course she doesn't really need me," her thoughts ran. And Daisy Bell had not needed her. Even Mrs. Dayton had given her up to the other influences with a kind of cordial readiness that hurt now. And Mrs. Wilmarth had a new friend. She was really *not* necessary to any one.

And it sometimes happens to a very well bal-

anced girl that a sudden wave of unexpectedness almost sweeps her off her mental poise. Her beliefs are attacked by doubts, her faith mysteriously undermined. She is disenchanted with the fairy-like aspects of life that have dazzled along the path and proved but a will o' wisp. And the stronger the girl the deeper hold the distrust seems to take upon her.

When the girls rose from the table two or three had some matters to lay before Miss Craven. They were eager as if asking advice. The light of interest illumined the plain face until it was fairly transfigured, and the eyes shone with a vivid light.

Oh, yes, Juliet Craven would have plenty of friends. She had won place and position, she was really admired. She was rich, she could do and have what she wanted. And if she had this lovely home any of the girls would be glad of an invitation. She would never want for friends. In her unjust anger Helen saw the great gulf between them that divides rich and poor. She would probably squeeze through college with just enough, not anything for luxuries. No doubt there were many well-to-do girls in all colleges, and they would naturally affiliate. She would ask no odds, no friendships. She could stand

quite alone. And then there would be years of teaching. For the first time it had a long, dreary look to Helen Grant. Mr. Warfield had grown captious over it, disheartened sometimes. There were stupid girls, frivolous girls, girls with no settled opinions, to-day one thing, to-morrow another, and this was the soil on which she was to work.

She did not look on the other side, at Mrs. Aldred, Miss Grace and Miss Wiley. Just now she wanted the baldest and hardest to strengthen herself, she said.

It was odd how the girls dispersed. The twins caught Juliet even before she was through with the older ones. Elma was not studying much, but she wanted to be in the classes and with her mates. And wouldn't Miss Craven take them for a walk?

She stooped and kissed both. Helen's heart swelled with a touch of jealousy, though she wouldn't own that, would indeed have been shocked if she had been accused of it. She stood by the window nursing her dissatisfaction with all things. She was not glad of herself just now, though she had felt brave and strong in many a darker hour.

"Oh, Miss Grant!" said a cheerful voice. "It's

so seldom anyone finds you alone. I really want to ask a favor. Miss Kent has gone to bed with a headache, she couldn't eat any dinner. And I'm in a mathematical difficulty. You have such a wonderful genius for figures. Do you know, I'd like to see your brain and what the involutes or convolutes—are those in the brain? are like, and how you reel off the different things."

Helen could not help laughing. She was sweet-natured at very foundation.

"Or were you going to walk or take a turn in the gymnasium?"

"Neither. If I can be of any assistance—"

"Oh, thank you. I'm awfully afraid I shall not get through. Why, June will be here before we are ready for it. Kate, you know, has had so much discipline and practice. I'm only going to take the very plainest college course, and I shan't cry if I don't win a diploma."

"Oh, why do you go?" interrupted Helen.

"It's foolish, but you see I love Kate, and I haven't any other real friend. I'm afraid some astute fellow will persuade me to marry him if I stay on by myself."

"But—if you cared for him—"

"I don't; that is, no one I have ever seen. And I'm so interested in Kate's career. Privately I

mean to make her over, now that she has a chance. Don't you see she takes more pains with her hair, and Sunday she wore a white mull tie. Women of that stamp want a good deal of softening. It didn't matter so much in our little old town where the women would have thought we had adopted French morals if we had dressed for dinner. And she really did have to save every penny to pay for her mother's finery. Oh, I don't wonder she took such a disgust to it. Oh dear! Four years! But then we mean to have such a nice, cheery home; Kate will be doing the world's work and I'll do the home work."

"I wonder you do not study nursing."

Miss Logan made a comically wry face.

"Oh, I've had enough of nursing. I couldn't endure it for steady company. But just a pretty, cheerful home with the books and pictures we like, and we'll get a nice-tempered nag, not too very old, and I'll drive Kate about, and the talks we will have, and the delights. That's going to give me courage to wade through the four years. And I wonder if you and your friend will not join forces—"

"Oh, no," interrupted Helen quickly. "I expect to teach. I shall have spent my little hoard by that time," and her tone was very emphatic.

"She is very rich, I have heard the girls say. There's something sweet about her, too, and her music is enchanting. How those twins adore her."

"What was the puzzle," and Helen turned to the book. She could not discuss Juliet.

It was very easy for the girl who knew how. They went on beyond the day's lesson. Girls were beginning to come in and there was a little chatter, but they soon settled to study. Miss Wiley was there to answer any puzzles. Then some of the girls begged that Miss Craven would play a little for them.

Juliet assented gracefully. Why, she was a pervasive influence! Helen suddenly felt like quite a little girl beside her. There was almost four years' difference in their ages. Had she been trying to keep her to her own level? And was not Juliet capable of making her own decision as to what she cared most for in life? But to go on by herself when she had counted so much on this friend! She had not been deeply hurt by Daisy Bell's defection, but this did make life look dreary.

There was a bright little talk, then they dispersed for the night, but Juliet did not come up stairs at once. Helen really hurried to bed. It was

almost eleven when Miss Craven came in softly. She lingered an instant at Helen's bedside, but made no sign.

After being wakeful and tossed to and fro with different emotions, Helen really overslept and dressed in a hurry. Juliet appeared unusually grave she thought, and she and Mrs. Aldred seemed in some very confidential relations. Helen noted when she went to her room for something that several new books lay on Juliet's table. The top one was very dainty in white and gold, exquisitely bound. It was a book of poems by Mrs. Gartney, an elegant Christmas edition. Helen flushed with an undefined emotion, and her heart swelled within her.

"If she does not want me to know—" but she was very unwilling to accept the consciousness. To be put off—shut out after these years of happy friendship was a more painful fact than she was willing to accept without a protest. Yet how to make it!

The routine of study was tiresome to-day. Not that it required a great effort, she would be able to pass her examinations she was quite sure. She would get into college—there would be other girls to like and to have good times with. But she should never strive for friendship again.

Perhaps her father was right about girls.

That evening as she was crossing the hall Mrs. Aldred said to Juliet—"If the old adage is true no news is good news."

Then there was a secret!

The books had been put away without any comment. In their girlish intimacy they had shown each other gifts, had talked over little perplexities and pleasures. How strange it all seemed!

Late the next afternoon Mrs. Aldred summoned Miss Craven. When she came to dinner Helen saw that she had been crying. Then she spent the evening in Mrs. Aldred's room. No one but Helen noted anything unusual. In the morning an announcement was made that startled the whole school. Mr. Gartney had died suddenly the day before, the result of a critical operation. An attendant was to come for the children.

They hardly comprehended the tidings.

"Are we coming back here?" cried Wilma in an eager insistent tone. "If we can't I will not go. I will not stay with that mamma. She does not like us. And oh, I like you so here!"

She clung to Mrs. Aldred's dress with a dry sob of terror.

"You will come back here, my dear children," said the soothing voice. "You are to live here henceforward. It will be only for a few days, and you must try to be good and gentle."

She gave each a fond caress, but they clung convulsively to her and Miss Craven. Death was something they could not realize.

CHAPTER XVI

AN AWAKENED POTENTIALITY

THERE was a general feeling of awe through the school. Mr. Gartney had been so devoted and so anxious about Elma after her accident that he had won golden opinions from the older pupils while the step-mother was wondered about. Mrs. Aldred had discouraged any gossip on the subject. He had seemed then in the flower of health.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Aldred in answer to some surmise, "the children are to remain here for several years. Mr. Gartney knew the seriousness of the case and made arrangements for them."

Miss Craven was excused from recitations and went to bed with a severe headache. After dinner Helen came up stairs and found her dressing.

"I want to go out for a walk. I feel much better. Will you go, Helen?" in a wistful tone.

"I shall be glad to." She thrust aside a little

annoyance. Did the incident need to have all this sorrow and mystery lavished upon it?

The days had grown longer. The air was delicious. The maples were in their red blossoming, the willows were tossing about their misty bridal veils. Crocuses and daffodils were out and violets were showing blue in the velvety grass. Birds were still fluttering about, calling to each other, and the thrush seemed murmuring his farewell to the day.

"Did you think it strange—" the voice broke.

"That you cared for him?" Helen would meet the issue squarely.

"I was sorry." There was no rising flush in the face, no special kindling of the eye. "It was a cruel strait to be in. He loved his children, he loved his wife—she must have been fascinating. Yet he had to stand between the two, and then to yield one to the other, to give up the children to some extent."

"He should have been just. He was weak. He had no real courage," declared Helen pointedly. "The children were first and he had a duty to them."

"It was a hard matter to adjust. They were mere babies when their mother died. As they grew older they had this nursery governess.



Crocuses and daffodils were out, and the violets were showing blue in the velvety grass. — Page 292.

The first event that called her to his mind was a little volume of exquisitely fine poems. Then they met and she was his ideal of a poet and it ended by their falling tremendously in love with each other and marrying. She was charming and made his home the envy of his friends. She thought it better that the children should go to school—she proposed a boarding school then, but he would not consent. They went to a day school in the neighborhood. They had their dinner early by themselves, for the Gartneys were always having guests. And it came to him after awhile that she was very jealous of them, that she kept them continually out of his way. She did not grudge them anything else, they were prettily dressed, they had little excursions with the maid, but she did not like to have them about. Often he never saw them but a few moments in the morning, for when he came home at night they were in bed and she would not have them disturbed. When he found it was likely to destroy their harmony he consented. So they came here and they had a peculiar frightened air, like prisoners just let out. I do not think she was stern or cross to them. They are singularly alone. Their mother was an only child, and Mr. Gartney was a child by a second

marriage, all the other children being much older, and now dead, except this half-sister where they went last summer, which was not a success. I think he suspected this trouble was serious when he was here, for he made arrangements with Mrs. Aldred to keep them until they were eighteen. They have some means from their mother's side which he expected to save for them. He spoke of the situation the night we were watching Elma, and it was done with the utmost delicacy. He knew the children would be happier here and develop more advantageously. He wanted them to have some love—"

"And he asked that of you?" Helen was still resentful.

"Why shouldn't I give something when so much has been given me? You came to me in my loneliness. Mrs. Howard has been a warm and interested friend. And Mrs. Aldred and all the others. Do you remember a package that came a few days ago? It was from Mr. Gartney. I want you to read the letter. A woman with more money than she knows how to spend ought to be of some service to the world. I do not want to live just for myself, just to cultivate the finer graces, to take the indulgences of fortune. And with the letter came two books of

poems, gathered from magazines. I've hardly had time to look into them."

Helen felt the hot blood rush from her heart to her face. She had misjudged Juliet, no not that; she had been afraid of a temptation and there had been no temptation, only the purest pity. She had been jealous, too, of these children, motherless girls, and now orphans. She could not get over it all in a moment, and she felt somehow she had lost the first place in the heart of her friend. Did anybody care first for her? Her brain had a kind of desperate dullness as if the shade and melancholy of the advancing years were destroying the brightness of girlhood when one hoped for and believed all things possible. Of course one couldn't go on forever in the glamour of childhood. You grew wiser, more experienced, you learned to judge more correctly. It was very unreasonable to suppose that life was going to be a path of roses.

The sun was going down behind the hills. The air was growing cooler and giving out the fragrant odors of all new growths. From a group of trees at the end of one street that led to the little river came the song of the wood thrush that seemed to end with a mournful question—oh why? oh why?

"We must turn about or we shall be late for dinner," said Helen after some moments of silence.

Juliet was a little chilled by the lack of sympathy. Helen had heretofore been so ready with that, and understood most matters so quickly.

"Are you tired? You look so," Helen said with more solicitude in her tone. "Haven't we walked too far?"

"My headache is mostly all gone. And I shall come in to dinner."

Afterward Helen went to the study room and loitered with the girls. It seemed strange to her that she could be so bright and cheerful with such a heavy heart.

She entered her room at length. Juliet had been looking over the books of poems.

"They are exquisite," she said glancing up. "I was waiting for you. I want you to read this letter."

"Do you truly? I shall not feel hurt," Helen replied from a sense of delicacy.

"I want you to know why I have resolved to do a little kindly work for those really in need. And then I want to talk over my plans."

The first page or two was about Mr. Gartney's impending trouble that he had mistrusted for

some time, that had now increased rapidly, and that rendered death certain unless something was done. There was danger in the present step, but there was also the promise of hope. Life was very sweet to him. He had realized some of his ambitions and was on the eve of greater successes. He was not a rich man but it looked now as if fortune might smile upon him. For his children's sake, as well as that of his wife, he hoped to be spared. But if the worst came he had one favor to beg of her. He had made arrangements with Mrs. Aldred for the children's education, even if their mother's money had to be used at the last. What he desired for them was the love and sympathy and guidance of an elder sister. She had been so kind to them and they adored her, could she add a little supervision in vacations when they tired of school life? He wanted them to know what a tender affection was like, and if she would sometimes talk of him and help them to recall the earlier years when they had been all in all to him and had the sole right to welcome his coming. "This is my earnest prayer," the letter went on. "There are very few I could ask this of, but I knew when you watched Elma's faint breathing and held her hands in love's clasp, warding off death if it were

possible, you were one of the women whose heart was large and loyal and had room in it for generous affection. So I have the courage to ask this from you if I have said good-bye to my darlings for the last time."

"He did love them," exclaimed Helen impulsively. "But I can't imagine a woman not caring at all for such gentle, clinging little things who show their delight so plainly when one proffers them tenderness. Oh, it must have been bitterly hard for him to know she would not, could not be a mother to them. I suppose it was jealousy!"

The tears of regret and shame rushed to Helen's eyes, for like a sudden shaft of light breaking through some confused space she seemed to be mysteriously enlightened about herself. She had felt proud of her sense of justice, of giving good measure everywhere, but here she had been jealous and harbored a wicked, shameful suspicion. What if Juliet was to love some one better, if the other one could fill a higher niche! And these two children needed all the affection any friend might bestow upon them to make their path sunnier after the great cloud that had fallen upon it!

"I think I do not quite understand jealousy

myself, which Holy Writ has declared 'Cruel as the grave,' " returned Juliet. "I could be hurt by neglect, I could be filled with pain and longing if a friend for whom I cared sincerely had turned away from me, but I feel that I do not possess all the graces and fine qualities in my own nature. God doesn't give each one every good gift, and some of the longings are little seeds implanted in us that we are to nurse and cherish until they unfold and bloom. And since I could not attract every one I ought to be willing to have them cull a flower here and there that does not grow in my garden."

"You shame me by your generosity," and Helen's voice broke while her eyes grew limpid with tears. "I am filled with self-reproach and regret that I should have grudged any one your regard."

"If I thought I should lose sight of you altogether I should have courage enough to take the four years in college—"

"No," interposed Helen. "I should not allow you to spend four years over matters that you are really not in love with for my sake merely. A successful college girl ought to be inspired with a love of study, an ambition to climb the hill tops and let nothing daunt. Of course all

girls may not be as enthusiastic," and she smiled a little over her flight.

"In a certain way I love study and I hope to go on learning all my life. But my heart craves something beside. I suppose my resolve seemed sudden to you, but I had been thinking it over and asked counsel of Mrs. Aldred. Something Mrs. Howard wrote when her loss was freshest moved me immeasurably. She said: 'If I only had a daughter like you. Sons may be kind and you may feel proud of them but a daughter goes to your heart and you are no longer alone.' I fancy she idealized me;" and Juliet flushed and smiled. "But I fondly remember the interest she evinced when I think I must have been rather insignificant and unpromising. But for her I should not have come here to school, should not have known you and had these happy years that have opened to me vistas of true living."

"Yes, I see that now. And she certainly has some claim. I'm not going to be selfish a day longer. I did not think I could be so ungenerous;" and the tears sprang to Helen's eyes.

"Then came the trouble about the house. Suddenly I felt as if I wanted a true home of my own, and some mothering, and both came straight in my way."

"And I seem to have had some lovely mothers all along," said Helen with deep contrite feeling.

"I hardly knew how to break this to you, Helen. I don't mean it shall separate us in the slightest respect. I shall have a lovely home and I want you to come to me as any sister would. You see you have hardly left girlhood and I have crossed the boundary of womanhood. Here are some delightful, satisfactory years unfolding before me; I want to be happy and useful; to whom much is given much will be required, you know. I think it means money as well as other things. There are women doing grand and noble works in the world, and though I do not expect to emulate them, I may make a few people happy."

Helen studied her in a sort of girlish surprise. She felt they had suddenly taken their rightful places. She had been the leader in many things; so many of the decisions had been hers that she had hardly thought of Juliet planning for herself, or really having force enough.

"And then came this sorrowful episode about the Gartneys," Juliet resumed. "He confided part of his trouble to Mrs. Aldred when Elma was ill; he had to explain why it was best not to take the child home for recuperation. And he

half suggested that his own health was not to be depended upon. I do not know whether he could have placed matters on a better foundation in the beginning, but that is all ended now and speculation is fruitless. You know I have said more than once I was fond of growing girls; I couldn't carry on a school, I have not Mrs. Aldred's discrimination in dealing with character and temperaments. And when these children were commended to my love I felt I might indeed be their elder sister. You see I shall not be able to spoil them during vacations, and Mrs. Aldred will have the real training of them. But I mean that my home shall be theirs and I want them to grow up loving me."

"But if Mrs. Howard doesn't favor the plan?" and Helen glanced up inquiringly.

"I am sure she will not object. If she could take pity on an awkward, ignorant girl such as I was, she will have a warm sympathy for these children, who are really attractive when you come to know them well. And I am sure I can count on your indulgence;" with a winsome smile.

Oh, how generous you are, Juliet!"

"But you see I make no sacrifice. Can that be called generosity? The pretty attractive home is for my pleasure, the thing I do really most de-

sire. And I want to bring to it the people I love, and the people who need love and pleasure and happiness. I want to make it a little oasis in the lives of some tired souls, so they can go on their way refreshed, and as I do not need a college degree for this, I am anxious to begin. We will have our summer together and I shall want to keep watch of every step of your way and be proud of your successes. You make an absolute joy of study. Mrs. Aldred said in the winter when we had so many talks, that a school of girls like you, who were as honest, as ambitious and thorough, would be the most delightful work in life that she could think of."

"Did she say that?" Helen's face glowed with pleasure. "Then I must be careful and live up to my reputation."

"And now is it all explained? You see there were matters of which I could not tell the end from the beginning. And they might not have ended this way. But it was from no lack of love—"

"And I really lacked the trust. I am ashamed of the doubts that crept in. And in a way I certainly was jealous, and I just hate jealousy, too, it is such a mean, grudging vice. I think

you have the most to forgive, I *am* sorry not to have you for my college chum—”

“And keep prodding me up continually, lest I should fall behind,” laughed Juliet interrupting her friend.

“I can see that your choice is better for yourself and I will not be so narrow and self-conceited as not to admit it. But I shall miss you. I am finding out every moment how much you have been to me this last year.”

“I am glad if I have made any return for what you were to me at first. Oh, you with your hopeful nature can hardly realize the dreariness and the longings of those first few months, unless it was that time you thought you would have to go away from all your friends to England.”

The tears glistened in Helen’s eyes, remembering that time little more than a year ago. Out of that dismal time had blossomed this rich and happy year. Had she not something beside the cup of cold water to give?

Yet after the lights were out and all was still, Helen thought of the change and wondered if she would make new friends as easily as she had heretofore. The four years of study did not look so glowing and enticing as they had. She wondered if she would consider it a necessity if

she had Juliet's fortune. How little her friend had ever plumed herself upon it!

"I do not believe I could have been so modest and unconcerned. Most girls were proud enough of rich fathers, even when there were more children to provide for, and hers was all her own."

A day or two after in a leisure hour they looked over Mrs. Gartney's poems. They were of the intense school with perfect rhythm and most musical; choice in their selection of words and escaping the tendency to hopelessness that seemed to shadow so many of the younger poets. Through the most sombre rift came a gleam of light cheering in its very unexpectedness.

In the second volume were some Christmas poems of the Virgin and her babe that breathed the most exquisite mother love and watchful solicitude, and prefiguring the sorrow of the days to come. There was "Good night to a Child" that touched one with its tender pathos, and other little gems that went to one's heart.

Helen had been reading them aloud. Sometimes there were little breaks and halts in her voice for they did appeal strongly to her emotional nature.

There was a silence of some moments, then Helen exclaimed indignantly—

"She could have so much imaginary tenderness for dream children, and none for these to whom she was to fulfill the duties of real motherhood!"

"Perhaps she did fulfill the outward duties."

"But the inward grace surely was lacking. And it looks like a direct punishment. She crowded them out of their father's love and now God has taken him from her. I dare say she will write some most pathetic poems of sorrow and loss, and the world will say—'How she loved him.'"

"Which will be the truth. I suppose there are exclusive natures that can love only one person."

"One person at a time," subjoined Helen with a touch of scorn. "And if we should keep up our knowledge of her we shall hear in the course of a few years that she is married again."

Juliet felt it was not wise to gainsay this.

After a week the children were returned to school robed in deepest mourning, and with a trunk full of new garments. Mrs. Gartney's letter was almost tragic. She thought it strange the children did not feel their loss more, she was simply overwhelmed, and she had only had Mr. Gartney barely three years. But she possessed a nature that suffered intensely, and her love had a depth that few could ever know. She had or-

dered the children's wardrobe, the other garments could be given to the poor. Mr. Gartney's business was in a sad state of confusion and he had died too young to amass much of a fortune. Whether there would be anything beside their mother's estate for them she could not tell at present. She would have no charge of the business.

"She had better not have bought such expensive outfits for the children," Grace Aldred said to her mother. "It seems cruel to load them with it. Summer is coming and by next fall the frocks will be outgrown. I cannot bear to see children shrouded in such deep mourning."

"They will wear white most of the time. Yes, it is really a waste," was the sensible reply.

Wilma expressed her opinions with girlish vehemence.

"I hate black frocks! What makes you have to wear them? All my sorrow and pain is inside, in my heart, and just makes it harder to look at the black things. I told mamma I didn't want them and she said I was a heartless little girl. I'm so glad we shall not have to live with her, and I am sure papa must be happier in heaven."

"What a pity children's hearts should carry

such a remembrance of dislike," Juliet said with a sigh. "Of course they hardly realize their loss, they have seen so little of him the past year."

"And they will be comforted." Helen glanced up at her friend. "I could almost envy them these years with their big sister, if I didn't mean to have a full sisterhood myself. They will have to take the school terms, so I shall not be jealous, only they will be here for Mrs. Aldred to mother, and I shall not find any mother in college walls."

"But you have that sweet Mrs. Bell. And I will give you a share in my Mrs. Howard if you like."

Helen smiled. They were warm friends again but on quite a different basis. Every day she discerned some new strength in Juliet, a womanly grace and tenderness. The girlish timidity seemed to have dropped away like a garment.

There were no regular holidays at Easter, which this year was late. Mrs. Howard came to make Miss Craven a little visit and talk over plans.

Helen did not wonder that the shy, unformed girl had been charmed with her. She was not specially handsome, but the sweetness and serene grace attracted one at once. Her refinement was

ingrained in her very nature, something nice and delicate and sweet that seemed to suggest the fragrance of violets. It had not been worn threadbare here and there by her two years of waiting on an invalid, and though he had grown irritable by the continual failure of hopes for recovery, she remembered the earlier days of his joyous and heartsome love and sweetened her way with it. Her softly waving hair was a little touched with silver and she had just the forehead to comb it loosely above her ears, and enough to make a pretty coil at the back. The narrow edge of white at her throat, and the white cuffs at her wrists softened the black attire. She had more of a society air than Mrs. Bell, neither did she resemble Mrs. Aldred. There was a really winsome expression to her blue-gray eyes, as if they might never grow old. And her voice had an indescribable sweetness. At the very last Mr. Howard had said—"No one reads or talks as you do. Your voice has such a soothing sound."

Mrs. Howard was delighted with the improvement in her protégé. The letters had indicated it, and she knew a girl ambitious for and amenable to such training as Mrs. Aldred's must develop on the right lines.

She had so much to say about Grey Court

Manor. A part of it had been transformed under a new name, Overcliff, a residential place much affected by wealthy city people. "So you may be sure your bargain will be an excellent one, Juliet, though Mr. Davis was quite inclined to depreciate it."

"Overcliff! Why that is where Daisy Bell went to the grand wedding last winter, a Miss Duer was married," interposed Helen.

Oh, at the Newells' place. It was remodeled from a fine old country house and is a most imposing mansion. I shouldn't want to leave it for months together if it was mine. Juliet, do not ever consent to having a dozen homes about the country, and just a bare modicum of time to spend at each."

"No, I want a real home, and I shall stay at it so much that I shall miss its familiar charms when I go away. I sometimes think of the wandering life I should lead with Mrs. Davis. She was at Washington, then at Havana, then Palm Beach, and has insisted that I should go abroad with her the last of May."

"Would you like to go?" asked Mrs. Howard.

"Not to be married off," laughed Juliet in an amused fashion. "That seems her greatest trouble about me, and she strives to impress me

with the fact that men are not looking for educated women, but those who are attractive and stylish."

"She is one of the most restless of women, though it is true that Mr. Davis seems to have business everywhere. But they seldom travel in the same direction. And I have been about so much searching for healthful places that when I do get settled down I am afraid I shall be hard to move. I sometimes think Mr. Howard would have lived as long with home comforts and quiet, as to be wandering about from place to place. Still, 'All that a man hath will he give for his life;'" and she sighed softly.

Helen was much interested in the description of the Manor, and Overcliff, which was on higher ground, while the Manor stood at the end of the long beautiful slope. The Newells came every summer for two or three months. That made her think about Daisy. One little note had reached her and been speedily answered, and that was all.

Mrs. Howard was much pleased with Juliet's protégés and evinced a warm sympathy in their lonely lot.

"And how often one meets with people who

have hardly a near relation! I am alone, Helen is an orphan, and these too—”

“And Miss Kent and Miss Logan, and that Miss Weir and Miss Bradbury,” interposed Helen laughingly. “Why we are almost an orphan asylum. Yet we are not positively doleful.”

“I do not think you are of the doleful order,” replied Mrs. Howard. “I am sure we shall be counting on your coming. But Juliet and I can plan for an entertaining summer, and we shall hardly be dull when winter comes.”

They were fain to make Helen promise to come to them at once, but there were several calls elsewhere. Mrs. Bell was pleading for a visit. Then it would never do to put Hope off to the last. And there would be college preparations to make.

“Unless I flunk at the last moment, which would be horrible indeed,” cried Helen, but there was no misgiving sound in her voice.

“There is a most beautiful garret to the Manor house,” declared Mrs. Howard; “and one chamber to sleep in. You shall have the sole use of it if misfortunes overtake you and you are compelled to retire to solitude to disentangle your brain from the cobwebs of too much pleasure.”

"You make it appear very attractive," replied the girl brightly.

"She's just splendid," declared Helen as they were walking back from the station after saying good-bye to Mrs. Howard, "I can't get quite resigned to not having you in college, but you will be very happy with her, I know. She has such a sweet, motherly way it goes to one's heart. I don't wonder that she made a deep impression on you. And though the world in general insists that women can't agree for any length of time, you as an advanced woman must disprove the statement."

"I am so glad and thankful to have a mother-friend, and a real home. And do you think I have a bad disposition?"

They both laughed at that.

"Is the lady, Mrs. Howard, going to be your new mamma?" Wilma asked Juliet that evening. "I like her very much, but do you suppose she will have love enough for us all if we go to live with you?"

"Oh, she has a large share of love. She will not be my mother exactly, but you may like her for a grandmamma."

"I think I will like that better," returned the child with a long breath of satisfaction.

CHAPTER XVII

TURNING THE LEAF OF GIRLHOOD

"ONLY three weeks of the term left!"

"And hardly a girl has decided on her college."

"Miss Anderson is going to Vassar."

"There are such hosts of girls at Vassar. I'd rather be in a smaller one."

"Oh, you poor, hard-worked being!" cried Polly Henderson. "Why, I wouldn't go to college for a fortune unless my lover was recreant and I heart-broken. No, I believe then I'd hide my grief in a convent. And to think my lover is waiting with bated breath—isn't that the state the hero is in generally? and mamma is getting my trousseau ready as far as she can. And there's a delightful journey to Europe—"

"After us the deluge," said some one sententiously.

"Oh, I don't want any deluge until I get back," cried Polly with mock apprehension.

They were going so many different ways and with different plans. Some were to be home

girls, two were to teach as soon as places could be obtained, and some were undecided.

"If it wasn't for the name of the thing I'd be a milliner. I can just dream out the most ravishing hats. Lady Something in London has some rooms and charges immense prices. I don't believe she can make a better bow than I can. If I had a title I wouldn't mind."

"Labor ipse voluptas."

"No, it isn't a pleasure either. Quote Italian for pleasure."

So they chattered. Miss Logan came around to Helen.

"Have you decided?" she asked.

"No. I am going up to Vassar with a friend just for a view and a consideration. Then there's the Women's College at Baltimore, and Mount Holyoke. O dear, it is the embarrassment of riches."

"I'd like to study the domestic sciences at Winthrop. Anything with domestic to it is like the saucepan handle to me, something good and strong to take hold of. But you see Kate desires something that will lead up to medicine, laboratories and all that. And we both want comparative cheapness, so long as it isn't too cheap. And a place where they don't give teas and par-

ties all the time, and you have to get costly changes of raiment."

"I have to think a little of that myself," returned Helen smilingly.

"And your friend is not going?"

"No. In some respects I am very sorry. But it is better for her. And she has an opportunity to have a most delightful home."

"And is she really going to take those little Gartney children?"

"Not exactly. They are to be educated here and spend their vacations with her. Mrs. Aldred and she are made guardians, and a man friend looks after their money."

"And their step-mother has gone to Europe."

"We had not heard of that," in surprise.

"There was a little item in this morning's paper. I suppose she was beautiful, and she will soon pick up another husband. Well, the children really were nothing to her, I fancy, and they are fortunate in falling into Mrs. Aldred's hands. I never knew much about boarding schools. Kate came here because the certificate admitted to college, and she's studied like a Trojan. Surely this is the loveliest place one could well imagine. It is like a beautiful little world. There's a largeness about it, a kind of

honor that makes a good, robust character. I suppose there will always be some silly girls, where the graces and accomplishments are taught, and they ought to be for women. I've been learning how much they add to any one. You know you can spoil truth by making it disagreeable, and you can make it very attractive without adding anything that is not true. And bright, neat, pretty attire makes a smile still more lovely. Oh, you do feel more like smiling with a consciousness that you look well."

"That is true enough," rejoined Helen.

"This has been such a happy year that I am almost afraid to go away. I don't believe I ever can find another place like it. And since happiness is such a blessed thing I am going to try to deal some of it out to others. That is one of the lessons I've learned. It doesn't take very much sometimes to add a joy to sombre life."

"And that is another excellent thing to keep in mind." Helen felt that she needed to try also.

"O dear! we must go to our studies or we never will pass. Kate is pegging away, bound to succeed. I just wish we were through. But then, there's that other study. However, we can be living together in the city then, in two or

three rooms, and oh, how many times we shall say—"Do you remember this at Aldred House, or that little happening?" There, good-bye and study."

She gave a soft, cheerful laugh, and almost danced away. She had a really pretty laugh. Helen took her book and went out of doors, finding a rustic seat. But somehow she could not study. The birds were flinging melodious notes all about, the leaves were dancing, now catching the sunshine, now hiding from it, the purple Canterbury bells were nodding and frisking, the roses and carnations made the air fragrant with now and then a pungent breath of the firs and cedars.

Yes, it had been a happy year to her. She, too, had learned some lessons. Not to judge too hastily, not to claim too much. An old couplet flashed through her mind—

Love compelling love to pay,
Sees him bankrupt every day.

No one person could go gathering all the blossoms of love for himself. God had so ordered it. Like the heavenly manna, there was enough for each a share, and it was many of the little betweens that join this and that in the perfect chain, the words that made remembrance sweet.

There were treasures to lay up for the com-

ing womanhood so that it might not take her unawares. Strength and truth of character, and the broad purposes of a useful life, the interests that would drive out trivialities, yet keep the sweetness of all social graces that could render life blessed to others.

Helen had the valedictory. "I almost feel like crying over it," she declared to Miss Aldred. "And what if I should break down?"

"My dear girl, we shall all be sorry to let you go, but there will be your career to watch with pride."

"If I were going to be a Doctor, or study law or go into literature—" regretfully.

"Yet teaching is the key note. You may help girls to all of these."

Margaret Holden was the class poet. Her people were rich enough to afford her the leisure to cultivate her talents; Nora Westwood was the beauty, tall and striking, yet she had hardly created the interest that Daisy Bell had last year; Edith Ray was going home to care for an invalid father and a flock of motherless children, and so the destinies ran on.

Miss Kent made an absolute protest about wearing a white graduation dress, but was overruled of course. The warm weather gave the

short hair at the edge of her forehead a tendency to curl, when she was persuaded not to brush it back so severely, and it did soften her face. Indeed every girl admitted to each other, that if she should outlive her rigid notions she might not be so bad after all.

The two friends were to remain in Westchester for awhile and had secured a pleasant boarding place and made an excellent friend in Mr. Danforth.

"For I shall have to study up in a good many things," said Miss Logan. "And my little shanty is hired out to a man who wants to buy it. It would be folly to go back there and be questioned and commented on by everybody, and advised to put your money to a better use, and hear all the little gossip of a narrow country place. Why, I don't think I could breathe there now!" and Miss Logan's face and voice were full of humor.

Commencement was peerless, it always was at Aldred House. There was an influx of guests and the exercises were highly complimented. Helen bore herself bravely, though some of the girls surreptitiously wiped a few tears from their eyes.

Mrs. Danforth sought her out afterwards.

"I hardly had time to come," she said to

Helen, "but I wouldn't have missed it for anything. No one really can estimate the good Mrs. Aldred does in training young women for useful lives. But Gordon wrote that I must remember and tell him everything about you. I shall be so sorry to have you go ; but I suppose we shall see you now and then. You can't quite forget us."

"Indeed I shall not," Helen replied from her full heart. She colored too at the thought of the remembrance and interest of Gordon Danforth, and the old refrain passed through her mind.

"It is such a pleasure to have your children do well," and there was a lovely light shining in the mother's eyes that Helen wished Gordon might see. "And I think you can estimate them pretty truly by the kind of girls they admire, and their companions. He thought so much of that Travis family. I do suppose they were charming."

"Indeed they were," Helen replied warmly.

"And he was so sorry not to come home this summer. Well, I shall write him a nice long letter to-day," said the mother.

There was a good deal of confusion to be sure, and some sad farewells. The dinner table showed many vacant places, and the girls gathered in a group afterward.

"I don't know why," Helen said, "but I feel quite as if I was coming back in the fall. I can't realize that I am going somewhere else to work and study. And oh, wouldn't it be odd if I should come back here and teach, and sink gently into declining womanhood? Isn't that a pretty way to put it?" and she laughed archly.

"You won't be likely to decline alone," declared Miss Logan with a face brimful of mirth. "You'll have lovers and lovers. You'll come out of college and step into a wedding gown."

"I don't know about that. Why, I haven't even an ideal. I never even had any boy admirers."

"Oh, yes, there was Jim," returned Juliet gayly.

"If they're going to be like that I should run away."

"And who was Jim?" asked Miss Logan.

"A big boy who thought himself a young man, and who bored me terribly," Helen answered with some impatience. "If they are all like that I do not want any of them."

"They grow up into men and improve, get a little sense, at least some of them do. But it is safe to have an ideal. It is like a yard stick and you can measure every one with it. Of course they'll fall short, and therein lies salvation. But one reason I have liked to be with you two

girls, and I dare say I have often bored you, is that you do not talk of lovers incessantly. I know I am doomed to be an old maid. Does that amuse you?" glancing at Helen in perfect good nature.

"I was thinking of a Miss Lane who taught when I was first here. She was twenty-nine, if I remember, and the girls had settled her fate for her. But she married a really fine clergyman to their surprise."

"Twenty-nine. Then there is almost seven years' grace for me;" and Miss Logan turned away laughing.

Juliet had arranged to take most of Helen's things away with her. She was to have a room with her own pictures and gift articles, and they would arrange it when she came, which would not be in several weeks. Mrs. Bell had written urgently for her, and she must visit Hope.

"We will study over the colleges then," Juliet said, "so have a nice care-free time. But I shall grudge every day."

The children were very eager to go to their new home. "It almost seems as if we might find papa there," Elma said plaintively. "Can't you ever come back when you are dead?"

"You will go to him sometime, in his new home, Heaven," Juliet said softly.

"And we shall have him quite to ourselves," drawing a long breath of content.

Helen had a tender and delightful talk that last evening with Mrs. Aldred, who realized that this girl had grown very dear to her. She had enough mental equipment to make a mark anywhere, and that it might not be spoiled, that she might keep her own sweet, truthful, generous self, her sweet readiness to do the things God placed in her way, for life was not all clear sailing, as she had learned, and it took wisdom and patience to guide the little barque of life aright. To be able to think correctly and unselfishly, to educate the conscience as well as the will and the intellect, to be so pure and strong that the delight of life should come in compassion, tenderness, and that high graciousness that thinketh no evil, that loveth the neighbor as one's self.

There were tears in Helen's eyes as Mrs. Aldred kissed her good night. She had not always deserved the praise. There was a profound humility in her heart.

Juliet was placing some last things in a trunk.

"There was a time a few weeks ago, Juliet, when I was very unjust to you, more deeply in my

heart than any words confessed just then. I shall miss you very much out of my life, but I do not think any one will ever be dearer. And if you will take me as a sister, and let me redeem—”

“Oh, hush, Helen,” she interrupted. “If you had not loved me there would have been no soreness. If I could have felt it best there would have been no parting of the ways; but it was impressed upon me by the Giver of all good that I must be of some use in His great world. And if you will accept my love and hope, and let us keep the same warm interest in each other’s lives, you will give me the greatest happiness.”

Both voices trembled a little, both eyes were dewy with tears. Out of the girl-fancies this was true friendship.

The next day each went her way. She could not well refuse Mrs. Bell’s urgent appeal and Willard was waiting for her at the station.

“I was so afraid some of those girls would get hold of you first,” he declared. “I can hardly believe in my good luck.”

“But I promised your mother,” she replied.

“And you certainly are a girl of your word,” with an appreciative smile.

Mr. Bell came to join them, and when they reached home Helen found Mr. and Mrs. Hollis

had come over to stay all night. What a sweet and gracious woman Mrs. Hollis was, an ideal clergyman's wife, Helen thought. Willard sat on her side of the table at dinner, and his small attentions brought the color to her cheek. Why should there be any uncomfortable consciousness? She wondered!

They had a most delightful evening. Mrs. Bell thought her improved in some indescribable manner, and she came very near to the mother's heart.

They went over to Woody Crest the next day. The rectory had been finished simply, and yet it had a decidedly picturesque aspect. Mr. Hollis had a fine library and many of the books were splendidly bound, "too beautiful to use," Helen said. And then they held an animated talk on the true uses of beauty, and the ability to appreciate it in its highest significance as in purity, and in raising the standard of many things, in making, doing right, and seeking good, attractive ways, instead of the hard and cold, but always keeping to the line of truth.

"That young girl has a fine mind," Lawrence Hollis said to his wife. "But unless she has a deal of reserve strength I am afraid she will not come out of college with as high ideals."

"I think it needs girls of just such ideals to go to college. They may have an influence for the very best over others."

"She is the kind of girl to be set in a home and exert her influence there. High-minded women striving to do their best are needed in the homes of to-day where there is so little desire for anything save pleasure. Marjorie, it is a pity Willard is not a few years older. What an admirable couple they would make."

"And yet they say women do all the match-making," laughed Marjorie.

Daisy and her husband had started for Japan and were to go round the world.

"Though I expect you get enthusiastic letters," Mrs. Bell remarked, "Daisy was so sorry not to have her dearest friends apprised of her wedding, but it came so sudden, I really did not know how to consent to it. Well, I hope all will go well with them. But I should have been better pleased if we could have kept her six months longer."

Helen would not say that she had received only one brief note from Daisy. Long ago she had learned the pain that even truthful admissions might give.

And there were so many delightful subjects to talk over, for Helen soon discerned that there was

a sense of discomfort in Daisy's marriage and tried not to notice that. The little grand-daughter was a great source of interest, and the mother came up every week or two with it.

Willard came home early, and they often went to drive. He was very earnest in getting through his law studies, and sure of his position afterward.

"It is such a fine, honorable firm," he declared proudly. "They never do any dirty work, but it is curious how many people come to them for it, and try to conceal the real point at issue. Mr. Fiske never pleads, but Mr. Ryder is very eloquent, though he will never take criminal cases. There is so much business in the large estates nowadays."

"Honor and integrity are fine foundation stones for a man's character and for his life," Helen returned enthusiastically.

He had seen considerable of the Travis family through the winter. The Osbornes had a lovely home. Annie had several admirers and he fancied she would soon make her choice. Jim was still at the Institute, but now was a base ball fiend, and had done splendid work in several games, and won two trophies.

So passed the week all too fast. They were

eager to have her stay, but there was so much to do, so many to visit who would feel hurt by her neglect.

"I wish there were not such a host of them," Willard remarked pettishly.

"You would not like to be ruled out!" she returned with spirit.

"But we are old friends. Mother loves you so. Why, Helen, you take Daisy's place. You are really a daughter of the house."

They were out on the old porch steps. Helen was startled with a vague uneasiness. Then she said laughingly—"You are the newest friends of all. The Hope people I have known always, that is most of them, and Miss Craven came to school soon after I did. Then I have to go there to settle some matters pertaining to college."

"Oh, you will do well enough without going to college. Lawrence thinks so. I wish I was—well about five years older."

"Oh, no, one gets old fast enough."

"Can you guess what I would do?" in a very earnest tone.

"Start in making a fortune;" in a gay voice.

"I should ask you to marry me."

"Willard!" with a strand of indignation.

"Well—I'd have the right in five years."

"If I hadn't—if I wasn't," confusedly.

"You haven't any lovers, I know. College girls don't get them easily, I believe, though they're sometimes awful flirts. And if you will promise to wait until we're both older—"

"I will not promise anything." She tried to rise, but he held her back. "Don't be angry, Helen, I think I've loved you since that first summer you were here, and I'm not sure but it put ambition in me to get to a place where I would have the right to say it. No one could be dearer to father and mother than you. Father really covets you. Oh you don't know how we talk of you, and what a pleasure it is to him. I know we are young and all that, and I didn't quite mean to say this, but you know it now and I am not ashamed of it. When I meet other girls I say in my heart—Helen is the most splendid of them all."

"Oh, I wish you had not, that you did not—" she rose then, but he still held her hand.

"But I have. I am not asking you to be engaged, only I am glad to have you know this. Oh, Helen, you really are innocent as a baby. I've done dozens of little things that would make a girl feel sure, but you don't understand—"

"I don't want it so. I can't have it so," she cried vehemently, her cheeks a flaming scarlet.

"It is so nevertheless. I know you haven't been thinking of love, but I've had it right before me for so long. Marjorie and Larry are splendid lovers. I think I did not quite like Mr. Duer, he was too extravagant, but it seemed to suit Daisy. And now we will go back to the old friendship. You will see how patient I can be."

"But we can't—ever;" with an almost angry intonation. "You have spoiled it all, I am going to college and there will be four years of study, and I shall not think of anything but that."

"You will write to mother?"

"Oh, you have spoiled that, too, I shall not take the pleasure in it—"

Helen stopped with a sob in her throat. She wanted to cry outright.

"You will go on just the same. This is our secret."

"I hate secrets!" she cried indignantly.

"Then forget this. Oh, do not be angry. Let it all be as if I hadn't said it."

"Ah, it could never be that."

Mrs. Bell came out. "What a lovely night," she exclaimed. "Helen, child, can you guess how we shall miss you? I wish you might stay longer."

Willard pushed out the rocking chair and brought the Japanese stool Helen was so fond of. Then he went around the other side of his mother.

"I have been thinking about those two little girls your school-mate is going to befriend," she began in her soft tone. "How very generous it is of her. Not the mere money, but the kindness and interest. It is quite a romance."

Helen's pulses beat a trifle more slowly. She could not keep her indignation up to white heat with this soft hand clasping hers. Did ever any one wish to be loved not quite so well? Was it ungrateful?

But she could talk freely of this. And presently they were joined by Mr. Bell. A daughter of the house. It floated through her brain like a refrain of music.

There was a rather sad good-bye the next morning with the motherly kiss. Willard drove and let his father sit on the back seat. He placed them together in the train and Helen felt it was very sweet of him. Then he said—"Will you take Helen down to the ferry? I must be at the office early."

Helen was glad, too, of that. Willard did not

want to give her an opportunity to lay any restrictions upon him.

While they were saying good-bye in the waiting room, some one came in with a stride and set down his suit case with a thump while he searched his pocket for a ticket. "Oh!" he ejaculated suddenly. "Why—Helen!"

"Mr. Warfield?" She was truly glad to meet him, and she introduced the two gentlemen.

"I have heard Miss Helen speak of you often," and Mr. Bell smiled cordially.

Mr. Warfield smiled also. It was pleasant to be remembered.

"I suppose you are going to Hope? Well, I am very glad to have you for a companion on the way."

Then she made her adieu and Mr. Warfield took charge of her. At this morning hour there were not many going out, so they had a choice of seats.

"I dare say you are surprised to see me, I've been up to Vernon Park, an old place with a new name. It is all city now, New York swallows up everything. There is a fine school that I've had my eye on two years. One of the Commissioners is a friend of mine. Last year I had only one rival who stood as high as I did, and as he

had a college degree he captured the place but he was not adapted to public schools and has gone to a Western college. They sent for me and I have the appointment. It is a fine, intelligent town with many advantages and a good salary. Of course I never expected to spend all my life in a place like Hope, sadly misnamed, isn't it?" with a satirical smile.

"I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart," returned Helen, glancing up with bright eyes.

"And you?"

Helen told over her plans. She had passed a fine examination and gone ahead of the required standard, but she had not selected her college yet.

What a fine, spirited, attractive girl she was with the charm higher than mere beauty, the charm that would not fade but go on increasing with years, real intelligence and a purpose to be a power in her little world. She might not understand this, few girls of eighteen did, but with his varied experience he could gauge girls quite correctly. Her clear, well-opened eyes, that expressed both hope and ambition, her fine complexion rosy with health, her smiling mouth, her air and carriage would make her a distinctive

woman a few years hence. Why should she waste her life trying to hammer education into the ordinary girl for whom dress and lovers were sufficient, and who would sink to the role of whist clubs and other fashionable gatherings, and the ordinary gossip of life? She could make a delightful home with the right sort of man, and though she had a resolute will, it would bend more easily in this period of youth.

"You have quite decided upon the college then?" he asked presently.

"Oh, yes."

"I can't say I quite approve of women's colleges. They seem to be a little world by themselves and get all manner of womanish ideas and nerves. The students fall into tremendous friendships and then are disappointed in their ideals and drop into a kind of desperate state and make themselves cynical, preach disenchantment, and doubt almost everything. Then when they leave their quasi-seclusion thinking they know everything that is to be known they are not fitted to cope with a world of men. They are spoiled for home and domestic women, they try to fill a man's place and are unable to meet the requirements, and all of life is a struggle."

"Oh, you ought to know Mrs. Aldred. You

would not feel that educated women did not know how to make a home," she replied eagerly. "Though she does not advise *all* girls to go to college;" and she glanced up with arch humor that was fascinating.

"What we want is the makers of homes, and wives. After all, the wisest and grandest influence does emanate from the home, and when a woman settles upon a career outside of that, she thinks at first that she will have a great influence on the questions of the day, but she finds out presently that her little word doesn't go very far, that she is of less importance, and that the career is less satisfying than she has thought. How many of the scholars and thinkers really mould public opinion, and those who do will be found to have a well-ordered home and a fine mother back of them."

She smiled a little and traversed some of his arguments. Even in a girls' school she had learned to give and take with good humor. There was truth in much of his reasoning but it was not the whole, broad truth. Or did she throw about it the glamour of youth and romance? She had once considered him so wise and learned, and he had been a good friend to her, let her admit that.

Altogether the talk interested and amused her, and passed the time rapidly until they drew into the small station. Mr. Wilmarth was awaiting her. Mr. Warfield felt rather annoyed.

"Are you not going on to Mrs. Dayton's?" in a rather disappointed tone.

"Not just now. Give her my love. Of course I shall be over. Oh, there are so many dear old friends to see."

The radiant face and winsome smile followed him like an actual presence. Well, he had some rights in this girl, his influence had been the first to rouse her. Why should one sow and another reap? He was able now to have a home and a wife. A husband was the beginning and end of a girl's dreams. And Helen was just at the lovely, impressionable age.

"I shall make it my business to see that she doesn't go to college," and he gave a complacent whistle as he stepped on Mrs. Dayton's stoop.

In five minutes the talk had passed mostly out of Helen's mind as she yielded to the delight of the warm welcome. And how Mrs. Wilmarth had improved! What a bright, pretty, eager woman she was with only a graceful feminine touch of the old languor, and the slight invalid bend of her shoulders had disappeared. Mrs. Gil-

bert had lost much of the careworn, uncertain expression. The room was charming with the half-lights and the bowls of flowers, the bright cushions, the magazines, the pretty cat curled up on a rug. Helen took it all in with supreme content. Juliet would make a home akin to this.

How they talked and talked. Both women were proud of her success and full of earnest wishes for her future.

And then she made them tell what they had been doing. They had been roused to take a little share of the great work—women's work in the uplifting of daily small events, not the great abstract truths that would be an unknown tongue in a place like Hope. For it *was* the real living that taught one to comprehend the truth, it was simplicity instead of meretricious ornament, giving of what was best suited to the other, sharing the pleasant and lovely things of life as one was able to appreciate them, and not keeping them upon the topmost shelf as one was apt to do with the best china.

"And I do think we shall start a Woman's Club presently," laughed Mrs. Wilmarth. "You may expect great things from Hope about the time you are through college."

She thought after she was in bed of the great

share she meant to take in the world's work in spite of Mr. Warfield's lugubriousness about it. And he was thinking of the share he meant her to take in his life. How matters came out for Helen we shall learn from the next book in the series, but it will have to be disclosed at this point that all plans to keep her from higher education were failures, as the title is to be, "Helen Grant in College."

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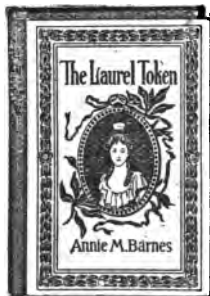
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